



Prospering in the Land: Redefining Prosperity Through a Refined Lens

Carol Stewart | ENG 268 | Fall 2025



Challenging Our Assumptions About Prosperity

What We Assume Prosperity Means

That if God loves us, our lives will be comfortable, financially secure, and blessed. We measure prosperity by money, by ease, by the things we can see and show.

The Radical Truth

In Latter-day Saint doctrine, prosperity means something radically different. It means the way God shapes and blesses us through experiences—some easy, some hard—all designed to prepare us for celestial life.

My anthology gathers twelve writings that teach this truth from different angles: scripture, prophets, theology, poetry, fiction, hymn, and song. Together, they argue that prosperity is not about getting more. It is about seeing more. It is about recognizing how rich we already are when we stop measuring in dollars and start measuring in faith, growth, and spiritual stability.

What Is God Actually Building in Your Life?

"Sometimes it feels like you are being torn apart. ***But nothing is being wasted.*** Everything is being transformed. And one day you will look back and realize: every pressure, every waiting, every heartbreak, every moment I did not understand—He was building something eternal with it. He was building me for glory."

— C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Prosperity is NOT

- A measure of money
- A guarantee of comfort
- Proof of visible success

Prosperity IS

- God's shaping power through experience
- Preparation for celestial life
- Both abundance AND limitation
- Both ease AND pressure

Lewis captures something that transforms how you see your life. God is not just maintaining you or fixing you. He is building something glorious—something celestial. Sometimes the building process feels like demolition. But God is not being wasteful or cruel. He is being intentional, constructing something that will outlast mortality and shine in eternity.

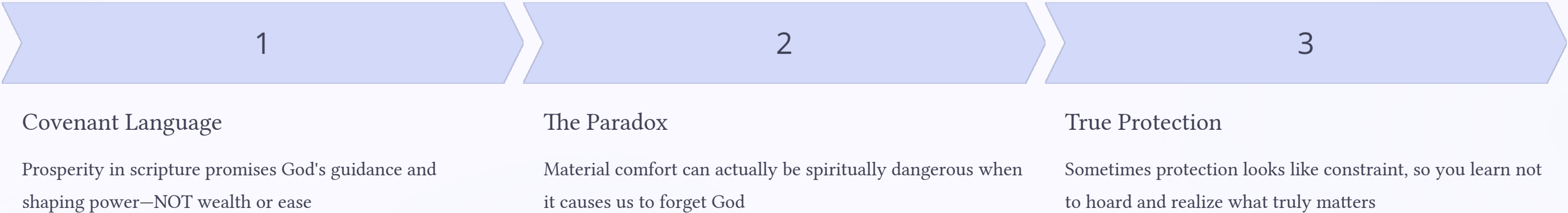
The Promise—And The Complication

'Inasmuch as ye shall keep the commandments of God ye shall prosper in the land.'

— Alma 36:1

"And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yet if they will repent and have faith on the name of Jesus Christ who was taught unto them by their fathers, they shall be saved. But at the very time when he doth **prosper his people**, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God."

— Helaman 12:2



Notice the full picture here. God promises to prosper His people. But then He warns that when prosperity becomes material ease, people forget Him. This is not a contradiction—this is a paradox. The promise is not that life will be easy if you keep the commandments. The promise is that if you keep the commandments, God will walk with you through whatever you need to become celestial.

Prosperity Defined by Elder Christofferson



"The Book of Mormon promise that we will '*prosper in the land*' does not refer to economic favoritism or the random distribution of riches. It refers instead to *the guidance and blessings of heaven—to living as the Lord's covenant people, to feeling His constant care and direction, to being protected and guided even when earthly conditions are difficult*. Prosperity in God's sight is not measured by the size of your bank account. It is measured by your closeness to Him, your faithfulness to your covenants, and your willingness to do His will."

— D. Todd Christofferson, General Conference

Elder Christofferson gives us modern apostolic clarity on ancient scripture. If you are modest in means but rich in faith, you are prospering. If your prayers seem unanswered on your timeline but you feel God's presence in your life, you are prospering. This teaching gives us permission to stop feeling like failures when we are not wealthy.

The Counterintuitive Promise

Your happiness is not hostage to your circumstances

"The joy we feel has little to do with the circumstances of our lives and everything to do with the focus of our lives."

— Russell M. Nelson, General Conference, "Joy and Spiritual Survival"

Focus on Christ
Place your attention on the Savior and His teachings

Experience Joy
Feel prosperity regardless of external circumstances



Remember Covenants
Keep your promises to God at the center of your life

Recognize Growth
Notice the eternal work being done in your soul

President Nelson speaks directly to something my anthology has been building toward: *prosperity is not determined by what happens to you. Prosperity is determined by where you place your focus.* A poor person focused on Christ can feel richer than a wealthy person focused on status. This is the paradox that changes everything. We cannot always control our circumstances, but we can always control our focus.

The Foundation: Spiritual Companionship

"Let us make it a deliberate, conscious part of our everyday striving to open our hearts to the Spirit of the Lord. Not in grand moments or mountain-top experiences, but in the quiet, ordinary moments of faithful living. For the companionship of the *Holy Ghost—that still, small voice guiding, comforting, directing—is a form of prosperity that no earthly treasure could ever replace*. When the Spirit is with us, we lack nothing. When the Spirit departs, we have everything but still lack everything that matters."

— Gerald N. Lund, BYU Devotional

01

Make it deliberate and conscious

Opening your heart to the Spirit becomes a daily practice, not a weekly event

02

Seek it in ordinary moments

Divine guidance comes in quiet, everyday experiences of faithful living

03

Recognize true prosperity

The companionship of the Holy Ghost outweighs any material success

Gerald Lund asks us to do something countercultural: make opening your heart to the Spirit a daily practice. Someone can be wealthy but spiritually isolated, cut off from divine direction. Someone can be modest in means but spiritually rich, constantly aware of God's presence, guided by personal revelation, feeling the Spirit comfort them in hard times. That person is prospering. That person is wealthy in the way eternity measures wealth.

The Reframing: When God Says "No"

"Divine discontent is not the world's restless envy or the voice of pride. Divine discontent is your soul recognizing its potential in Christ. It is the Holy Ghost saying to your heart: 'You are meant for more than comfort. You are being prepared for something celestial. Trust the process. Trust the refinement. And know that unmet expectations, far from being evidence that I have abandoned you, are often the exact experiences that will draw you closest to Me.'"

— Michelle D. Craig

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes."

— Doctrine and Covenants 121:7–8

- Unmet expectations are NOT failure

Your prayers weren't ignored—they're being answered differently than you planned
- They are often part of God's refining work

What feels like disappointment may be divine preparation for something greater
- Struggle can be prosperity in disguise

The very experiences that humble you draw you closest to God

Sister Craig teaches there is a kind of discontent that is divine. It is not the world's restlessness or envy. Divine discontent is your soul recognizing its potential in Christ. You prayed for something and did not get it. Your life did not turn out the way you planned. And now you are humbled, dependent on God, learning to trust His will. That is prosperity. That is refinement.

The Permission You Need

Worthiness Is Not Flawlessness

"Worthiness is not flawlessness. It is not the burden of perfection or the exhaustion of performing righteousness. Worthiness is being honest. Worthiness is trying. Worthiness is falling down and getting back up. Worthiness is the sincere effort to keep your covenants even when you stumble, repent, and try again. God does not ask for perfection. He asks for your genuine heart. And when you offer that—your honest, imperfect, trying heart—He prospers you with grace, with peace, and with the assurance that you are enough."

— Bradley R. Wilcox, General Conference



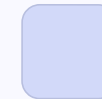
Prosperity is spiritual stability, not perfection

You are blessed for your genuine effort, not your flawless performance



You do not have to be perfect to be blessed

God sees your sincere heart and walks with you through your stumbling



You have to be willing and honest

Worthiness comes from trying, repenting, getting back up, and trying again

Brother Wilcox gives us permission to stop performing perfection. God is not a harsh judge waiting to punish your mistakes. He is a loving Father who blesses you for your genuine effort. He prospers you as you try, as you stumble, as you learn. ***Prosperity is not the absence of struggle or failure. It is the peace of knowing you are trying, and He sees you, and He is walking with you through it.***



Prosperity Is Experienced, Not Just Defined

Fiction: Orson Scott Card

"What they had been throwing away all their lives was worth saving after all." A young man searches beneath the Salt Lake Temple for gold and finds crushed soda cans carved with wishes—prayers left by faithful Saints. What the world deems worthless holds profound spiritual meaning.

Poetry: James Goldberg

"Jesus does not save us from our lives." *The Five Books of Jesus* teaches through poetry how discipleship is lived, felt, and experienced in real relationships and real faith—showing prosperity in the everyday moments of following Christ.

Testimony: Patricia T. Holland

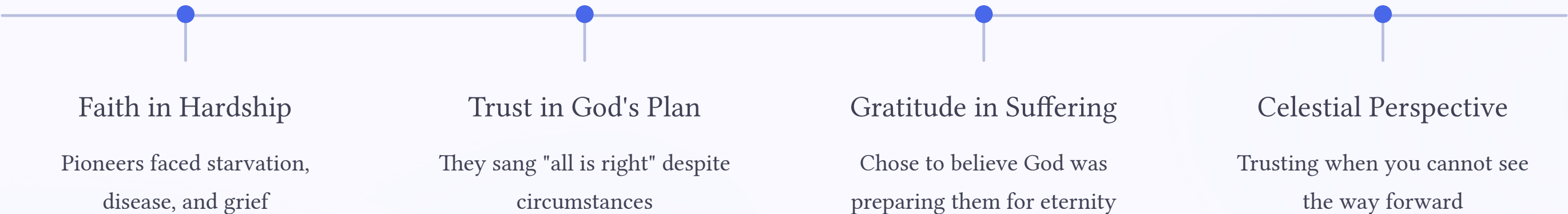
"Sisters, I pray we will live with a sense of linked generations—remembering that our faith and sacrifice today will steady hearts we may never meet." Prosperity will extend across generations through our forefather's faithful living.

Prosperity is experienced when you read a story and recognize your own faith journey. When you hear a testimony and know you are not alone. When you listen to a podcast and feel the Spirit confirm truth. This is lived prosperity, it's not just defined in doctrine, instead it is felt in our hearts.

Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard?

"Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard? 'Tis not so; all is right. These words were sung by Latter-day Saint pioneers walking across the plains in winter, facing starvation, disease, and grief. They did not sing because their circumstances were easy. They sang because they understood something celestial: that faith is not the absence of hardship. *Faith is the ability to feel prosperous in the midst of hardship, to trust God's plan when you cannot see the outcome, to choose gratitude in suffering, to believe that even the loss and the waiting and the unanswered prayers are part of how God is making you eternal.* That is not denial. That is the celestial mindset."

— "Come, Come, Ye Saints," verse 2



These pioneers could have sung songs of complaint or abandonment. Instead, they sang: "All is right." Not because everything was fine, but because they trusted that God's plan for them was good. This hymn is of covenant—early Saints singing to us across generations, saying: yes, life is hard. Yes, prayers take time. And yes, through it all, all is right. All is in God's hands. *That is prosperity.*

Prosperity: Pirkei Avot 4:1 (Ethics of the Fathers)



Growth in Christ

Becoming more like the Savior through every experience



Relationships

Eternal connections that matter more than possessions



The Spirit

Divine companionship that guides and comforts



Gratitude

Recognizing how prosperous we already are



True Riches

Eternal value cannot be measured in dollars



Net Worth ≠ Self Worth

Your financial status does not define your value to God

This proverb captures the heart of my anthology. It defines a rich person as someone who rejoices in what God has already given, not someone who simply has more.

Our worth is not our net worth. Prosperity is measured by who we are becoming in Christ, by our relationships, by the presence of the Holy Ghost, and by our willingness to keep trying in hard seasons. When we choose gratitude and notice those quiet blessings, we begin to see that we are already prospering in ways we would never trade for any monetary amount.

How I Made My Resource Choices



Research Phase

I gathered 22 potential sources across multiple genres, looking for works that addressed prosperity from different angles



Evaluation Criteria

Each work had to offer a unique perspective, avoid redundancy, and clearly support the core message that prosperity is eternal preparation



Genre Balance

I ensured representation across scripture, modern prophets, theology, poetry, fiction, and music for a complete picture



Final Selection

The twelve chosen works together create the clearest, most powerful testimony of what prosperity truly means

The work of curation means making hard choices so the final collection is tighter, clearer, and more powerful than everything collected. I asked myself: Does another source make this point more clearly? Does this add something essential that's missing? The result is an anthology where every piece matters and contributes something irreplaceable to understanding prosperity through an eternal lens.

12 Selected Works

Prosper in the Land: Count Your Blessings

Book of Mormon Alma 36:1, Helaman 12:2, Mosiah 21:16	Doctrine and Covenants D&C 121:7–8
D. Todd Christofferson General Conference Address	Michelle D. Craig General Conference Address
Daniel L. Larsen General Conference Address	Gerald N. Lund BYU Devotional
Camille Fronk Olson Religious Nonfiction (<i>But If Not</i>)	C. S. Lewis Theology (<i>Mere Christianity</i>)
James Goldberg Religious Poetry (<i>The Five Books of Jesus</i>)	Orson Scott Card Fiction ("Salvage")
The Church of Jesus Christ Podcast ("Prosper in the Land")	"Come, Come, Ye Saints" Hymn / Music

These twelve works span multiple genres: scripture, prophetic address, devotional teaching, theology, poetry, fiction, podcast, and hymn. They all testify of the same truth: prosperity is covenant companionship with God, refined through experience, expressed in gratitude and growth. Each work approaches the theme from a different angle, creating a powerful journey through what prosperity actually means.

Works Not Included

Related Works That Did Not Make the Final Anthology

Bradley R. Wilcox

"Worthiness Is Not Flawlessness" (represented through themes rather than separate entry)

Jeffrey R. Holland

General Conference (similar timing-of-blessings message covered by other sources)

Russell M. Nelson

"Joy and Spiritual Survival" (themes integrated into other selections)

Hugh Nibley

Approaching Zion (theology included through Lewis instead)

George Eliot

Middlemarch (service themes present in scriptural selections)

It's a Wonderful Life

Film (relationships theme covered by Goldberg and Card)

U2

"I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" (modern music represented through hymn)

I reviewed many more sources than I could include. My goal was not to gather everything written about prosperity, but to curate the pieces that add something unique and essential to the conversation. In every case, I asked: *Does this work say something non-repetitive? Does it offer a perspective not already covered?* These ten works are genuinely excellent and informed my thinking deeply, but they did not make the final twelve because the chosen works create a more coherent, less redundant, and more powerful journey.