

He saw it was
GOOD

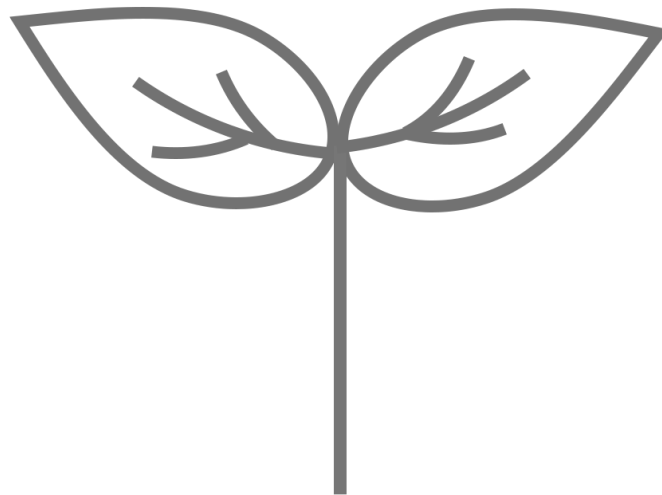
AN MAF BIBLE STUDY

PARTICIPANT'S WORKBOOK



SESSION 4

From Seeds To Saplings



Introduction

In the first video, MAF staff presenters Sheonagh and Matt will introduce the topic of Prosperity and how MAF Uganda flights enable organisations to rebuild the lives of those affected by displacement in South Sudan due to conflict. Make any notes in the provided box below.

Scripture

‘Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.’

3 John 1:2-4 (NKJV)

We will be returning to this verse later in the study.

The SDGs and Prosperity

In this next video, our presenters will walk you through the Sustainable Development goal of helping 'Prosperity' — our next 'P'.

As you watch the video, make any notes you wish to in the space below. Jot down any facts and statistics that you will find helpful to ponder and pray over in the future.



Devotion

Written by Simon Dunsmore

Prosperity, like love, is a relative term. Its meaning shifts across contexts. Here in our western, materialistic and predominantly secular culture we tend to associate prosperity with financial success and a lavish lifestyle.

However, for the majority world, economic insecurity and limited access to the fundamental necessities of life often result in lives lived out in desperate poverty. For these nations, the definition of prosperity can take on a new and entirely different meaning.

In this context, prosperity can simply mean surviving.

In 1954, American psychologist Abraham Maslow published his theory of the hierarchy of needs. His famous pyramid prioritises the elements that people require to thrive or prosper.

With the base of the pyramid describing basic physiological needs such as food, water and sleep, Maslow theorised that before anyone can progress to the higher steps of safety, love, esteem and — ultimately — self-realisation, the conditions of the level below must first be met.

There's no doubt that, regardless of our culture, social status or economic situation, there are physical elements that human beings need to survive — with sustenance and shelter ranking high on the list. However, from a biblical standpoint, Maslow's theory could be seen as sadly lacking.

Jesus, quoting from **Deuteronomy 8:3**, says, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God' (**Matthew 4:4**). His words introduce an aspect that Maslow never considered.

As believers, it's unlikely that we would disagree about the importance of spiritual sustenance, but how does this help the African farmer whose crops have failed and who is unable to feed his family, or the refugee who's been driven from the security of her home due to conflict?

Surely, no matter how eloquently the Gospel message is delivered, the immediate concern for physical succour would appear to outweigh those of someone's eternal soul.

So how should the missionary labouring overseas — or those at home providing support — present a God of love and compassion?

It is noteworthy that Jesus didn't say that man doesn't need bread to live, He simply stated that people have other needs that also require sustenance.

Regardless of our physical condition, geographical location or financial status, to truly prosper, people also need psychological and spiritual nourishment.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 shows that man is a tripartite being. We are more than flesh and blood. In fact, the Scriptures order our spirit and soul over that of our body or physical being. This is where Maslow's secular theory begins to fail, having predominantly focused on the physical needs of human beings.

As Christians, however, we may be equally guilty in our approach. In our passion to see God's Word preached to those who haven't heard its life-transforming message, we can sometimes neglect the equally important element of practical support.

It is one thing for the seed of the Gospel to be sown. However, for it to grow and bear fruit, the whole person must be nourished, fed and cared for. If we are to truly see our neighbour prosper and thrive, mission must be holistic.

Holistic or 'integral' mission is a term indicating that, when it comes to Christian mission, God is concerned with the whole person, and the whole community. His care encompasses body, soul *and* spirit.

If Christians are to reveal God's heart for the nations, then we cannot just concentrate on one aspect.

Review

What does it mean to prosper?

How might the interpretation of prosperity differ within a developing world context?

What should mission look like within the context of prosperity?

What is the difference between a prosperous and a fulfilling life?

MAF Story

This next video, introduced by your presenters Matt and Sheonagh, will give you an insight into the work MAF helps facilitate for three different organisations in the refugee camps in Uganda.

Reflection

The World Bank states that *'For almost 25 years, extreme poverty was steadily declining. However, global extreme poverty rose in 2020 for the first time in over 20 years as the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic compounded the forces of conflict and climate change, which were already slowing poverty reduction progress.'*

- When you read statements like those above, what effect does this have on your view of the Church's responsibility to bring positive change?
- What is God's heart for the nations when it comes to the concept of prosperity?

Repentance

Depending on how your leader is running your course, you can either ponder these questions during the study, or use them in a personal time of reflection on your own after the study is over.

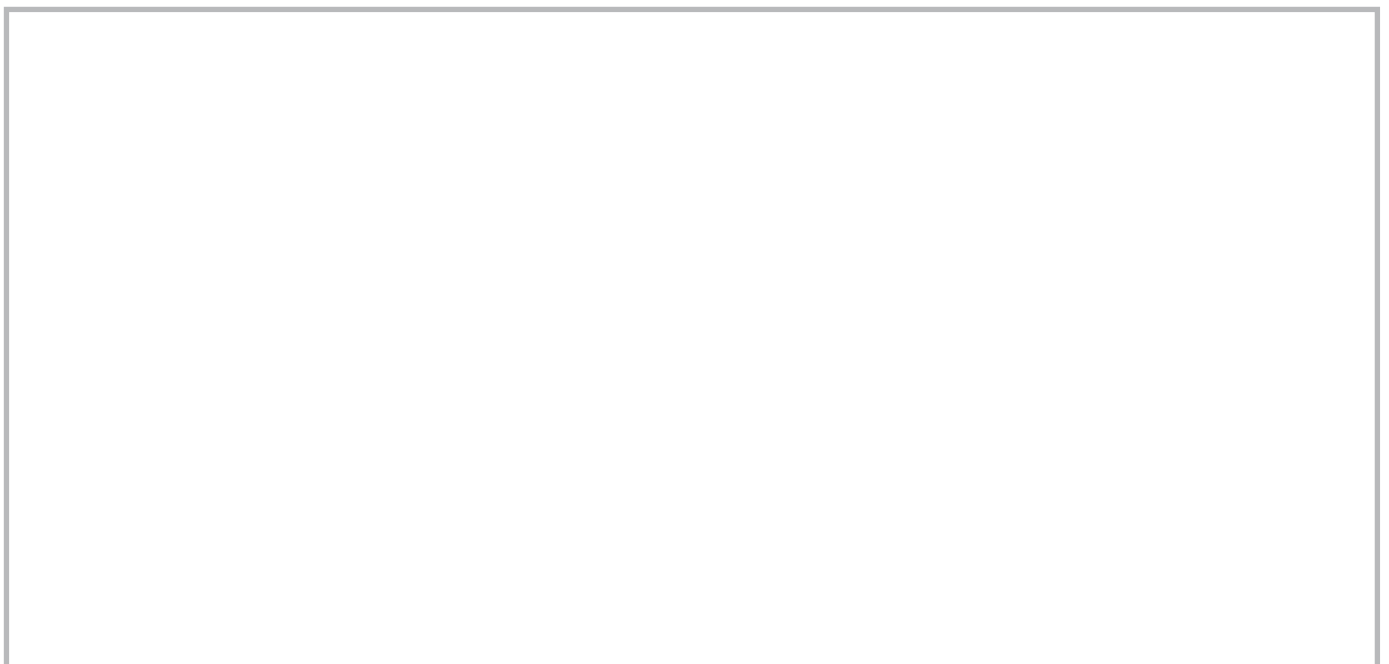
'The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.'

John 10:10 (NKJV)

'I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."

Matthew 25:36-40 (NKJV)

- Consider how these two portions of Scripture relate to each other and our role in partnering with God to see others enter into an abundant life.
- Take some time to seek God about what prosperity means for you personally.



Prayer

- Pray that the United Nations' aim for the world, that 'all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives', is something that can be achieved in our lifetime.
- Pray that, as Christians, we can bear witness to what it means for our souls to 'prosper' through a relationship with Jesus. Pray too that, when showing people the love of Christ, 'prosperity' isn't just something that considers physical needs, but includes the spiritual as well.
- Pray for the work going on throughout the developing world which MAF assists and enables. Work that strives to see remote and isolated people prosper where they are — giving them access to life's essentials.
- Pray for those who have lost everything through conflict or natural disaster and have been displaced. May they receive access to the resources needed to rebuild their lives in safety and harmony.

Jot down any other areas you would like to pray for — for example, prayers for the state of the world, the work of MAF or the Sustainable Development Agenda.



After today's study, please consider becoming part of a *For the Sake of the World* prayer group. To find out more, or to set up your own group, please visit <http://forthesakeoftheworld.com>

Response

To close this fourth study, you will hear again from presenters Sheonagh and Matt. They will challenge you to think about what practical actions you could commit to as a take-away from this session.

- Think about the people you know personally – or those within your local community – who are struggling to prosper or are living with the effects of physical or spiritual poverty. How can you help improve your neighbours' lives and circumstances? Is there something practical you can do? Can you intercede for them by bringing their needs before God?



Find out more

We have lots of other examples of how MAF helps to advance the sustainable development agenda through our work and ministry, and also through partnering with other organisations seeking to reach the most isolated communities on earth.

If you would like to continue your journey in this session of the Bible Study and find out more, please visit **www.maf-uk.org/findoutmore** and we'll introduce you to some more stories from where MAF serves around the world.

MAF Discovery Air Pass

Why not continue on your journey with MAF and get your free MAF boarding pass and join us on a journey of discovery to visit places rarely featured in travel brochures, and to meet people living far from the tourist trail. Sign up for our Discovery Air Pass journey and see the world from a unique perspective.

'Fly' with MAF from country to country and find out what it's like to live, work and serve in some of the most isolated places on earth. Every couple of months, you will receive inspiration by post or email: updates from our pilots, real-life stories, fascinating facts and opportunities to support our work. Check in at **www.maf-uk.org/discover-now**