

LISTENING IN WITH ... **CATHERINE PONDER**



The name **Catherine Ponder** has long been synonymous in Unity circles with studying the laws of prosperity. Ponder was a young widow and single mother working as a legal secretary when she began reading about prosperity. She was ordained in 1958, the same year a recession hit. At the request of two women attending Unity of Birmingham, where Ponder then served, the newly minted minister began teaching a weekly prosperity course based on Charles Fillmore's 1936 book *Prosperity*. Ponder would go on to found three Unity churches—two in Texas and a global ministry based in California, where she still serves. Through it all, Ponder has written 17 books, including several best-sellers, and has lectured widely. Soon after celebrating her 90th birthday, she discussed her life and her work with *Unity Magazine* editor **Katy Koontz**.

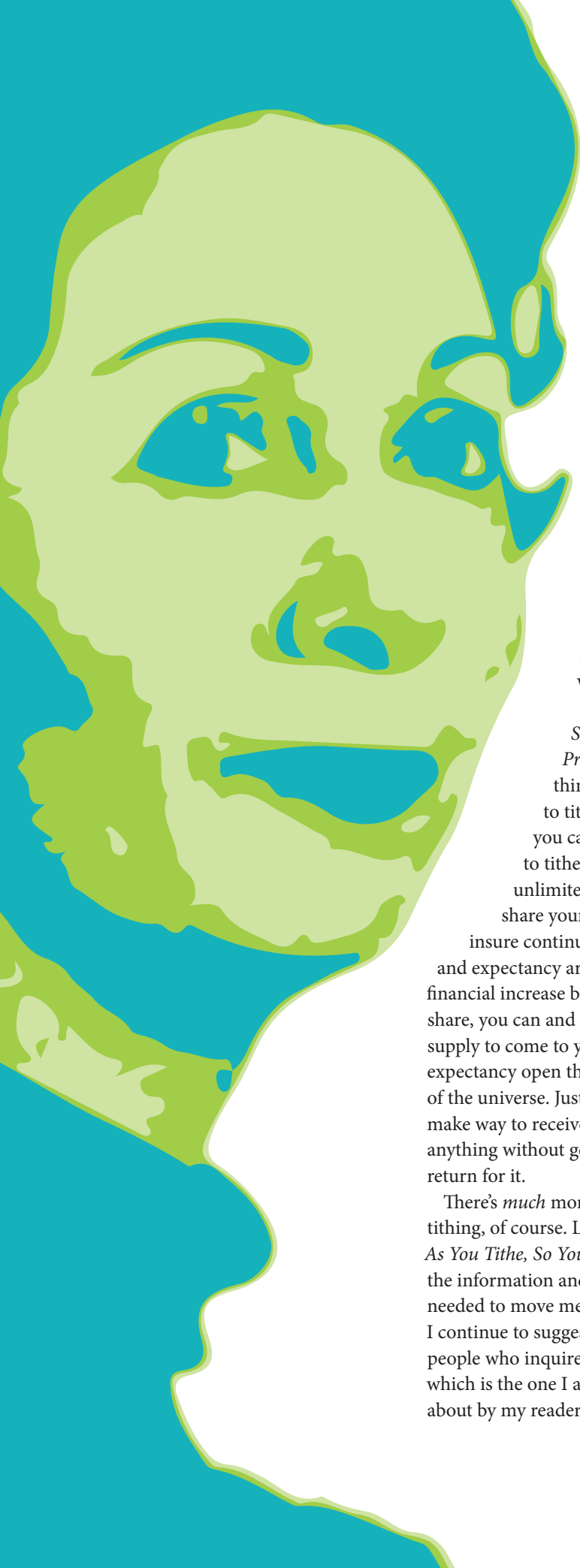
PONDERING THE **PRINCIPLES OF PROSPERITY**

Katy Koontz: Most people think of money and finances when they think of prosperity, but you advise not limiting the definition in this way. Why is having a broader view important?

Catherine Ponder: The word *prosper* in its root means “wholeness.” You are prosperous to the degree that

you are experiencing peace, health, and plenty in your world. In Charles Fillmore's book *Prosperity*, he describes the power of prosperous thinking in this way: “Turn the great energy of the thinking upon ideas of plenty, and you will have plenty—regardless of what people about you are doing or saying.”

KK: Tithing—giving 10 percent of your gross income to the source of your spiritual sustenance—is a key part of your prosperity teaching. You make the point that tithing generates prosperity only when you give gratefully and without fear instead of out of obligation. What advice do you have for anxious tithers?



CP: It is through the law of giving and receiving that we demonstrate prosperity, and the first step of receiving is giving. The act of giving moves on universal substance and starts substance flowing back to you in some appropriate form. We are never impoverished by giving, only enriched, and there is always something we can give.

As I wrote in *The Secret of Unlimited Prosperity*, when you think you can't afford to tithe, that's when you cannot afford not to tithe. Tithing releases unlimited supply. You must share your substance to insure continuation of it. Sharing and expectancy are the beginning of financial increase because when you share, you can and should expect a new supply to come to you. Your faith and expectancy open the way. It is the law of the universe. Just as you must give to make way to receive, you cannot give anything without getting something in return for it.

There's *much* more to be said about tithing, of course. L.E. Meyer's booklet, *As You Tithe, So You Prosper*, contained the information and inspiration needed to move me to begin tithing. I continue to suggest that booklet to people who inquire about the subject, which is the one I am most asked about by my readers.

KK: You teach that affirmations spoken aloud have more power than those affirmations we merely think to ourselves. Why is that so?

CP: The spoken word releases the energy you keep inside when you're just thinking about it. It releases that energy into the universe, letting it go, so it can return to you fulfilled. The most powerful technique of all, however, is when you combine the power of the spoken word with the power of the written word and the power of imagination. Picture what you want in your mind, write out your desires on paper, and then speak the word out loud daily.

KK: You link forgiveness and prosperity, which is a connection I think most people don't make. What's the higher truth at work here?

CP: In a pamphlet called *A True Remedy*, Charles Fillmore wrote that by sitting quietly every day and dwelling on forgiveness, all sorts of physical, emotional, financial, and other problems could be resolved. People sometimes say, "But I cannot forgive—not yet." Release is the topside of forgiveness; when unable to forgive, begin releasing, loosening, letting go. Try this affirmation: *Christ in me (the spirit of Truth) is my forgiving power. So I fully and freely forgive, loose, and let go and let God.*

A schoolteacher, after hearing a lecture on forgiveness, told me, "I am going home and forgiving everybody I know!"

I thought, *Good luck, dear. Good luck.* I noticed that she did not appear at our weekly lectures again for several weeks. When she finally showed up, I asked her, "How are things?"

"I feel terrible," the schoolteacher replied. "I have been practicing that forgiveness you talked about and I

just didn't know that I *hated* so many people."

KK: I want to ask about *chemicalization*—a cleansing process that takes place when everything seems to be going counter to what you are affirming for and intending. Why does that happen?

CP: In *chemicalization*, a situation worsening is actually a part of its improvement. When people begin to practice right thinking, there's a clash between the old and new ways of thinking that sets up a chemical reaction in mind, body, and affairs. The dominant negative thought patterns that live in the subconscious—such as strong fears, willfulness, prejudice, jealousy, and resentment—get stirred up. These old emotions have been in place for so long that they don't want to give up without a fight. *Chemicalization* is uncomfortable, but it's a natural and positive process. If you don't panic or try to resist the process, you will get through it and something higher and better will always result—so be grateful it's happening. Think of it as a kind of spring-cleaning!

KK: When you began practicing prosperity consciousness, what was the first outcome you experienced that impressed you in a big way?

CP: After I began to study the Unity prosperity teachings, I got my first raise as a legal secretary. I worked for a lawyer who was a graduate from Duke and Harvard law schools. He was slow to give raises, so I considered that raise from \$25 a week to \$27.50 a triumph. Later when he became mayor, the city also started paying me as secretary to the mayor. So I ended up making \$50 a week. (Meanwhile, no one knew that I had contacted Silent Unity concerning

my prosperity prayers or that I had entered my boss's name for mayor with Silent Unity.)

KK: You have so many stories of people who have used prosperity consciousness with fabulous results. What's your all-time favorite story?

CP: One of my favorite stories is about a gentleman who at the age of 50 went from rags to riches in 10 years. After he attended my prosperity lecture, he started tithing. Before he'd been going from job to job, but he soon got a job he liked—for the first time in his life—as a salesman for a steel company. His wife's poor health began to improve, so there were fewer medical bills to pay.

RIGHT THINKING COULD LEAD TO RIGHT LIVING.

In two years, the local dealership of the steel company he worked for became available. He borrowed the money necessary to buy out the dealership and became the owner of his own company! Soon, he was able to start an investment program for himself and his family. He continued to tithe and to affirm for the best, and even when he had losses, he would soon realize even greater gains. Twelve years after he began to tithe, he became financially independent. He truly tithed his way to a greater good.

KK: Of all your numerous books, do you have a favorite?

CP: My first book became my long-term best-seller. It was the result of having taught prosperity classes during a recession in the late 1950s. People came from all over to attend that class! As they began to quietly relate the results they were experiencing, I made notes, and then I wrote prosperity articles for the Unity publications. Out of those articles was born *The Dynamic Laws of Prosperity*, published by Prentice Hall in 1962. As George Carpenter, longtime editor of *Unity Magazine* back in the day, declared, "It's fine to write about physical and emotional healings, but we also need to know how to heal the sick pocketbook." This book shows us how.

A few of my other favorites have been *Prospering Power of Love* (Unity Books, 1966), *Open Your Mind to Prosperity* (Unity Books, 1971), *Open Your Mind to Receive* (DeVorss, 1983), and *Pray and Grow Rich* (Parker, 1968), since updated and retitled as *The Dynamic Laws of Prayer* (DeVorss, 1987).

KK: How did you first hear about the Unity movement?

CP: When I was young and my mother was raising three small children, she became quite ill. My father met an electrical engineer who came to inspect the Carolina Power and Light Company substation he operated in North Carolina. My father told him about my mother's daunting health problems. The engineer pulled an issue of *Unity Magazine* out of his hip pocket, handed it to my father, and said, "Call these people in Kansas City, and they will pray with you about your wife's health."

"But we are Presbyterian," my father told the engineer.

“That doesn’t matter,” the engineer said. “These people are nondenominational and will be glad to pray for your wife.” He did, and a few days later, my mother was up and around, functioning properly again. (She lived to the age of 80 and was active until her passing.) After that, whenever a problem arose in the family, my father would say to my mother, “Contact those people in Kansas City and tell them to straighten out this problem.” My mother dutifully did so and the problem got “straightened out.”

My mother kept leaving Unity publications around our house because she thought my father “needed” them, but he never took the hint. I eventually wondered what kind of “propaganda” my mother was leaving for my father, so I finally picked up an issue of *Unity Magazine*. I thought, *Wow! Why didn’t Mother tell me what’s in this literature? This is what I have believed all my life.*

After that I became an avid reader of Unity literature and books. In 1950, I attended a retreat at Unity Village with others from around the world and had the revelation that made a believer of me. I returned in the early 1950s to attend what was then called Unity Training School. I became a licensed Unity minister in 1957 and was ordained by Lowell Fillmore, son of Unity founders Charles Fillmore and Myrtle Fillmore, in 1958.

KK: What then-living person most influenced you while you were studying to be a Unity minister?

CP: I had the opportunity to observe Dr. George LeRoy Dale at Unity

School in the 1950s. He was the most outstanding to me. He had a bombastic personality and taught a noncredit “exercise class” that consisted of doing exercise to affirmations with piano accompaniment. He talked about the power of affirmations, treasure mapping (or vision boards), and tithing, and he gave wonderful illustrations of people he knew who had proved the power of such use. Dr. Dale, an early chiropractor, had been a personal student of the legendary Bernard Mayfaden, a well-known health guru of that era. He had also been a close associate of Charles Fillmore, working as his business manager in the early years of Unity.

KK: For a long time, you didn’t give your age. Why was that?

CP: I have not needed to dwell on my age since it has been correctly listed in *Who’s Who* for the past 50 years. On February 14 of this year, I turned 90. I am still working from my home in Palm Springs, California, doing a bit of socializing and so on. My son, Richard Thrower, and his lovely wife Karen live nearby. In an era when people were “old” in their 40s, Charles Fillmore lived to almost 94, and Myrtle Fillmore lived to 86. Both had been diagnosed with “incurable” conditions, but they proved that right thinking could lead to right living. Amen!

KK: Has your teaching changed at all over time? And are the questions asked of you from those in this new generation any different from those of past generations?

CP: My teaching hasn’t changed one bit since I started teaching about prosperity in the 1950s. I’ve never deviated from it. And there’s nothing new about the questions I get. In fact, I’m now receiving letters from the children and grandchildren of my original readers! Everybody still has the same needs, and they’re still looking for answers to the same problems.

KK: What in your work now brings you the most joy?

CP: I get the most joy hearing from my readers and answering their letters. I enjoy writing the Unity Church Worldwide monthly newsletter, *Keys to Prosperity*, which I’ve been doing since 1973. I include a monthly message and letters from my readers on their success from using my teachings. The newsletter goes out to thousands of people globally, and we receive hundreds of letters every week about the demonstrations readers have received from my books, along with prayer requests for additional help in their everyday lives. 🌍



Catherine Ponder in the 1980s.

To receive the Unity Church Worldwide free monthly newsletter, *Keys to Prosperity*, and be added to the mailing list, or to order any of Catherine Ponder’s books or CDs, write to Unity Church Worldwide, P.O. Box 1536, Palm Desert, California 92261.