Giving in a Challenging Economy

by Ron Blue

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Recently, our economy feels less certain than it used to.

We skeptically watch the Dow Jones average creep back up, wondering when it will correct downward again. We read our retirement statements and believe that the dollar amounts are fleeting and less than dependable. We go to work each day and push back nagging thoughts about losing our jobs or having to let people go. Fear has set in. Striving and saving are the order of the day.

Perhaps your giving has diminished. Perhaps it has gone down in proportion to the drop in your income, or perhaps you've tightened the belt on giving in an effort to save and be more careful about the future of your family. What is the appropriate connection between economic downturns and adjustments in giving in the believer's life? This is a valid and important question.

As we ponder this question, I'd like to focus on four "G's" in an effort to define a paradigm for giving in this new economy.

These "G's" are: Gospel, Grace, Generosity, and Giving.

The gospel of Christ is a message of grace. Until we grapple with the radical nature of the message of the gospel, we will be bound by attempts to control our own acceptability before God the Father. Jesus paid it ALL so that we could stand entirely faultless before His Father. We receive it ALL, with no effort of our own. Isaiah 40:2 (NIV) says, "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

As we embrace the gospel and the grace of Christ, our hearts respond with generosity toward others. Generosity and giving go hand in hand. When we have generosity in our hearts, we find ourselves opening up our pocketbooks and giving financially to those in need. Therefore, as you follow the flow of these four "G's", the gospel of Christ and His gift of grace yield outcomes of generosity and giving in a Christian's life.

Financial downturns are scary. They shake our feelings of security and they cause us to think that our efforts and plans may not be "enough," financially. When we fear, we often turn away from a grace mentality and toward a striving mentality. We seek to gain control of our situation, and we easily forget God's sovereignty and His grace. The wellspring of generosity in our lives can become clogged with worries and concerns.

However, in spite of today's changing economy, the gospel has not changed, and the grace we have in Christ has not changed. As believers, we need to return our focus to the truth of God's abundant spiritual provision as well as His promises to care for our material needs. (see Matthew 6:27 - 29) Since the gospel and grace remain constant, our response of generosity can also remain, and even grow, in difficult economic times. While giving financially may be more of a sacrifice in difficult times, we can rest assured that the challenge that sacrificial giving presents to our hearts will yield abundant spiritual growth and blessing. We can also take this opportunity to expand our very definition of giving. If giving abundantly financially is more challenging for you lately, realize that you can express your generosity in so many ways…through your time, through your relationships, through your hospitality, through your talents, etc.

The following quotes come from people just like you who have embraced this paradigm of giving. They reveal a dependence on the gospel of Jesus and His grace in their attitudes of generosity and their acts of giving. May we draw encouragement from what they say, and may we constantly be drawn back to the radical generosity of Jesus in our lives.

"Today we are giving more from our assets as well as from our income. In today's economy, it's an opportunity to put into practice what we said a generous giver should do. Although it is scary, it's been a great blessing." - Don, Business Owner

"Due to the economic falter, our family has experienced a series of financial losses. With a fresh realization of what's truly important, I find myself actively looking for creative ways to give more generously. We are spending less in order to give more." - Danny, Insurance Executive

"Even with these tough economic times, I really feel that trusting God is going to be an exciting thing. My heart wants to be more generous." - Lynne, Entrepreneur

"Some have said, 'never waste a good crisis'. God has allowed this economic downturn to put our church through a financial crisis that has created a spiritual revival as we study His truth about biblical stewardship and learn to trust Him with our time, talent and treasure. I have never been more excited about the direction of our church vision and we have witnessed increased giving during this difficult time."
- Kyle, Oil and Energy Executive

"Just because God moved things from one bucket to another hasn't changed the fact that it is all His. Nothing has changed for us." - Anonymous

GENEROUS GIVING

Experience the Joy.