

Has the economy “bankrupted” the Church? - It shouldn't but it did.
by Michael McCall

The state of the economy has caused congregations all over this country to cut back their work and support. This has begun to make me wonder – at what point should the economy, the state of this world, play a role in Church finances, more specifically our contribution?

Think about this:

When the economy is level, or slowly rising, each member sets aside what they will give to the Lord, and what they will spend on their life.

However, when the economy is down, like it has been for a period of 10 years, most people give less to the Lord, yet still spend equal amount or more on their life.

Yet, when the economy is above normal and rising with no ceiling in sight, most people give the same amount to the Lord as they did when the economy was level, and increase what they spend on their life.

Does this make sense? Not to me.

If we have the proper mindset on what is truly important, and we understand how our contribution is used, whether or not the economy is bad or level we should continue to give our normal amount, even if it means we sacrifice something in our own lives. Why, to ensure that the congregation can continue its work without strain.

Question - Where in your budget does your contribution go? At the top, in the middle, or what is left over after you have lived your life?

Too many congregations across these United States are suffering, while their members still have all the “necessities” of life. For example, cable TV with the premium movie packages and sport packages, or how about the additional cell phone for our kids, etc. None of which are sinful or wrong in of themselves. However, we need to re-lookup the word “necessity” in the dictionary. Then look to what our brethren did in Acts 2 and Acts 4 and ask ourselves, “Why do we have a record of what they did? For an example to follow, or just for an “at-a-boy” for them?” Paul wrote that the Churches of Macedonia gave more than their ability to give, and did it freely. (II Corinthians 8 : 1- 4) What an encouragement – or What an example?

Remember – the Church is not a business, it can't sell more for less and make money. The Church is not the government; it can't tax people more, print more money, or go into debt. The Church runs on the benevolence of its members who should realize that the Church is all that matters in life, because the Church is the Kingdom of God. God loves a cheerful giver, which one of our scenarios above = cheerfully given?

Why is it that the Church must cut back on the work it is called to do, while we continue to live our lives at the same pace?

A bad economy should only play a role on what we feel is “necessary” for us to live our comfortable lives. There are many brethren out their truly suffering due to lost jobs, loss of health, or other reasons. And yet the Church is hamstrung by those of us who still have our jobs and our health yet are giving less, blaming the economy, while still living our lives to the fullest. This causes the Church to go “bankrupt”, i.e. cut back in areas which are necessary for the growth of God’s kingdom, the spread of the gospel, and the taking care of its members.

I understand that everything costs more today than it did yesterday. But why is it that the first cut we make is in our contribution to the Lord, and not in other areas of our lives? We have grown too comfortable with the conveniences of the world while the Church struggles to survive.

Finally, Paul also wrote, “For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by equality...” (II Corinthians 8 : 13 – 14). I am not suggesting that any of us should take out a loan, should stop paying our car payments or mortgages. I am not even suggesting that any of us should take a second job. I am however suggesting that we give up the excess in our lives so that the Church does not have to give up necessities.