



A Tight Economy and Planned Giving

Everywhere you look the price of everything is going up. Gasoline has gone up 26% since this time last year. SHOCKER! Since most of us are used to daily commutes, running the kids here and there for their various activities, and visiting friends and family, this price increase is affecting us. The Consumer Price Index figures say this is the number one thing that's gone up in our household budgets this year — and it's only June!

We might feel stressed because of the rising cost of such basis as fuel and food. During difficult economical times, it is so necessary for Christians to be even more vigilance in planned and purposed giving.

The Bible has very clear teachings on giving and there are occasions that giving in the early church was done during hard times. Paul spoke of these hardships in 2 Corinthians 6:3-13. In the middle of these situations, Paul reminded the church at Corinth about sowing generously. Two chapters later (ch 8), Paul speaks about the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, *"their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity . . . they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability"* (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

It is a grand blessing to give back to the Lord! When Christians serve as good stewards of the money they have been blessed with, the Lord's church will continue to grow no matter what the external circumstances are. Truly, this is a time for planned and generous giving for the sake of something larger than ourselves: the Lord's work! As the church, both individually and collectively, looks at our giving there are several keys principles that can guide us in our giving:

1. **God Owns Everything, and We Are His Managers** (Psalms 24:1) *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."* Deuteronomy 8:18 - *"Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth."*
2. **We must live today in light of eternity** (1 Timothy 6:17-19) *"Command those who are rich in this present world . . . to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."*
3. **Our hearts follow our money** (Matthew 6:19-21)- *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*
4. **God Prospers Us Not to Raise Our Standard of Living, but Our Standard of Giving** (2 Corinthians 9:10-11) *"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."*

Blessings,
Danny