

## **COMMENTARY**

# **TODAY'S UNCERTAIN ECONOMY & THE ROLE OF STEWARDSHIP**

(Excerpts from an article in the LCMS "Reporter")

### **By Allen Helms**

I just filled my car's gas tank at the price of \$3.82 per gallon. Who knows how much higher the price might go? What about the high number of home mortgage defaults and related foreclosure proceedings? And now we hear that food prices are likely to increase because of flood-ruined crops.

Higher prices will more than likely have an impact on what churchgoers place in offering plates.

Rev. Wayne Knolhoff, Director of Stewardship with LCMS District and Congregational Services, says repeatedly that any teaching on the subject of stewardship must start with the steward and the fact that we are justified by God on account of Christ's work, by grace through faith.

With those truths as a foundation, I would like to offer some thoughts and suggestions.

### **Put Steward before Stewardship**

We need to understand what it means to be a steward before we talk about the practice of stewardship.

R. Scott Rodin defines a steward this way in his book, *Stewards in the Kingdom*: "A steward is under the command of one who owns the resources to be stewarded. Stewards are by definition not owners, but they have a relationship with the owner in order to be a faithful steward."

### **Consider the Concept of Firstfruits versus Leftovers**

A Christian steward does not give out of what is left over at the end of the week or month, but gives proportionately from the income he or she is blessed to receive.

Rising prices affect what's left, not what has been committed. Paul writes, "For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means..." (2 Cor. 8:3)

The Bible never suggests an amount, but always speaks of percentages - percentage of income.

### **Practice Sacrificial Giving**

By definition, to sacrifice is to give something



up for the benefit of someone or something else. Sacrificial giving for the Christian steward is to give up earthly, temporary things when finances get tight and still honor a monetary commitment to Christ and His Church.

Some of us may have to do without that extra night at the restaurant and the movies, or an extravagant vacation. What are you willing to sacrifice in order to make your financial commitment to your Lord and church when money gets tight? It's hard to give something up, but sacrifice means just that!

### **The Role of Faith is Key**

God desires we possess a faith which believes He will provide all the things we need.

"Consider the birds ... consider the lilies ... how much more will He clothe you?" (Matt. 6:26-30)

In faith, we, as Christian stewards, can now address financial stewardship questions from a new perspective which changes our line of questioning! No longer do we ask: "How much will we give to God?" Now we ask: "How much of what is God's can we in good conscience use just for ourselves?"

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### **HELPFUL RESOURCE**

A proper personal budget will help in the struggle to survive current rising costs. Consult the SELC District website for helpful information about financial planning.

[www.selc.lcms.org](http://www.selc.lcms.org)

Stewardship (Personal Stewardship...Budgeting)