

Enduring A Recession

Proverbs 2:1-5 NIV

Preface

Illus: When we lived in Mississippi there was a man who used to do the oddest thing every year. Sometime in February when the grass was all brown and dormant, he would set his yard on fire. His entire yard would quickly burn and become completely covered in a black soot finish. But then in the spring, his yard would always grow back into a nice luscious green lawn. The burning was temporary. It purged the weeds and insects and allowed the lawn to really grow when the sunshine returned.

Optional Illus: My experience in Bass Pro Shop.

If we place our faith in God and follow the principals of his Word, not only can we endure the recession, we can grow and even prosper from the experience.

Scripture

*My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
2 turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,
3 and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
4 and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:1-5*

Introduction

For God's children our hope and joy is not built on the foundation of money. God's word instructs us in Hebrews 13:5; *"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*

As Christians we believe in hard work and enjoying the fruits of our labor. **However, our joy does not rest in our property and**

possessions. Instead the riches of our soul are stored up in the promises of God. What greater promise than to know God will never leave us and will never forsake us.

Some Christians make their financial decisions motivated by fear of the future. Still others base their decisions on complete optimism without any thought to what the future holds.

Neither approach is biblical. God would have us trust in Him for our provisions and **recognize that He is able.** At the same time, God would have us live, spend and plan based on the principals taught in His word.

In other words, we should not rely on our gut feelings or instinct but rather on God's word. For some this is simply impossible. Some people are just too smart and too self confident to ever trust their future to God's Word.

But for true believers who place their trust in God, a recession does not threaten our joy and happiness.

I would like to address a few things I believe God's Word teaches us that are keys to enduring a recession.

1. Spend Conservatively

A practical and biblical approach to surviving a recession begins with **spending our money conservatively and wisely.**

Proverbs 17:16 says, *"¹⁶Of what use is money in the hand of a fool, since he has no desire to get wisdom?"*

In other words we must not be foolish in our spending. A recession is a great opportunity for making wise investments. The price of many goods and services are down.

There are many "good deals" out there. However, **we must be wise in our spending and spend our money very conservatively.**

Christians should be cautious not to incur debt during a recession with the exception of wise investments in things that will help produce income.

A recession is a time to use wisdom and discipline. Listen to the experience of your parents and the teaching of God's Word. Spend your money conservatively.

2. Work Liberally

I always cringe when I hear someone say something like, “**I am just not going to work for that.**” Usually those words are coming from someone who is unemployed and **looking for that dream job and refuses to take anything less.** They will never work their way up the ladder because the lower rung is beneath them and the higher rungs are out of reach.

Business people often take similar attitudes of pride. A recession is no time to refuse even the small jobs.

Work liberally. Take whatever work you can get and work hard at it. Work with pride and give it your absolute very best.

²³ *All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty. Proverbs 14:23 NIV*

¹⁹ *He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty. Prov. 28:19 NIV*

These days old fashion customer service is unheard of. You are lucky to get a “have a nice day” remark as you leave. No one seems to know how to say “thank you” anymore.

Illus: A few weeks ago I went by Chick-Fil-A and picked up some lunch. Before leaving I said the normal “Thank you.” To my surprise, the employee responded by saying “My pleasure.” Could it really be that someone actually enjoyed serving me and taking my money?

A recession is no time to be cocky about what work you will do. Take whatever work you can get, give it your absolute best and be thankful for it. Honor **God with your work.**

3. Count Blessings

Recession or no recession, a **Christian should always have a grateful heart** for the blessing from God. We should view all that we have as a direct blessing from our Heavenly Father.

During difficult times it is especially important to **count your blessings rather than focusing on your problems.**

Illus: Who would you rather do something for, someone who is ungrateful or someone who is extremely grateful for what you do?

The Bible teaches that God is the same way. He blesses those who are grateful and loves rewarding them by answering their prayers. Count your blessings even in the difficulties of a recession.

As believers, we do not take inventory of our life based on worldly possessions. **Our real stock is not our possessions but rather our relationships with others and with God.**

4. Give Generously

Often, when Christians are prompted by fear of their financial future, they cut back on their giving. Their tithes and offerings become a first step in their attempt at financial stability. **Doing so is to cut off your actual source of income - God.**

Honoring God's mandate to tithe our income and keep our offering vows to God is the best way to ensure that we will not become victims of financial downturns. When commitments are made they should be honored if we expect God to bless us.

Giving generously isn't limited to our giving to the church. In difficult financial times such as a recession, Christians should keep a steady eye out for opportunities to help others even with small donations.

²⁴ *One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. ²⁵ A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. Prov. 11:24-25*

A recession is a perfect time to discover opportunities to help others. **When the recession is over will you be known for your greed or your generosity?**

Illus: Imagine taking a small child to a movie and buying them popcorn and a drink. Suppose you ask for some of the popcorn the child tells you “No, it's mine.” The child doesn't understand several things: 1) You are the one who provided the treat to begin with. 2) You have the power to take it from the child at will. 3) You have the resources to provide more popcorn than the child could eat. We must understand the same is true of God.

God will bless the generous not the greedy. God will bless the faithful not the unfaithful.

5. Pray Aggressively

As you face the challenges of a recession, there is no better time to shore up your prayer life. **This is a time to learn to pray earnestly, openly and aggressively to our Heavenly Father.**

The Bible says God wants to hear from our hearts. He knows our hearts and is eager to have us discover our true desires and lay them before His throne.

We need to be candid and persistent with God. Don't be afraid to ask God to help you find a job or to help you find ways to make more income. Just keep in mind that God is not going to bless or answer your prayers if you aren't going to be faithful to Him. Those who show up in church once every 4 to 8 weeks, are not receiving the blessings of God because they are not serious in their commitment to Him.

God wants us pray aggressively but he also wants us to **back up our prayers with solid devotion to Him.** We are talking about God; there is no fooling Him. He knows our innermost thoughts.

⁹ "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:9-13 NIV

Illus: For many years I was not comfortable praying to God about my finances. I have learned the best thing I can do about my finances is to pray.

We must decide if we truly believe God is able to supply our needs or if we are just saying we believe. If we truly believe, we will pray aggressively and persistently.

Conclusion

Illus: I can't help but to think about David and Goliath. The Israelite army and King Saul were hopeless. They saw their defeat at the hand of a giant man. For 40 days they had been cowed down in fear. The Israelites saw a mismatch and a slaughter in the making. They saw a giant with lots of armor and a huge spear.

But David saw something very different. With confidence in himself and confidence in God, he looked at Goliath from a different perspective. He looked upon Goliath and pondered how God would open the door for him to have victory.

What did David see? He saw a big fat exposed forehead!

Too often we are bound up by how we see things. Sometimes we have to back up and look at things differently.

When things look bleak; look again and again. As you face the Goliaths in your life, ask God to give you a fresh vision of a path to victory.

Christians should not see doom and gloom during this time. Instead we should see opportunity to explore new options and trust God for our happiness.

Optional Illus: Bass Pro Shop

This week, the recession has really been on my heart. It hurts to see people struggling financially.

I would like for us to have a time of prayer. I want to invite anyone who would like to come forward and join me at the altar to do so now.

Let's join together in praying about our economy and for those in our church and community who are struggling.