

# Curious Economic Indicators

by Gene McCoy

Are people suffering from economic woes as much as they claim? Is niggardliness when the offering plate is passed really due to their lack of financial resources?

Political rhetoric in recent years has included the assertion that our national economy has not been as bad since the Great Depression. I am neither an economist nor historian, but I must wonder if those who endured the depression are both amused and disgusted by the comparison.

Our concern, however, is the effect such rhetoric has upon a Christian's stewardship. If the grim economic outlook has caused people to pull the purse strings ever so tightly when the offering plate is passed, perhaps some observations are in order to reinforce proper priorities.

A drive down Main Street may indicate that the economy is not as bad as reported. Count the number of storage units in town. Paying to store excess and unused stuff may indicate we have more than we need; including money.

On your drive, also note the number of places where people may have tattoos applied to their body and where body piercing is done.

Also note the number of businesses specifically devoted to the enhancement of fingernails and toenails.

If things are as bad economically as people claim, how could those establishments remain in business? Some Christians have actually robbed God to secure a tattoo or to have their body pierced and studded. Some spend what rightfully belongs to God to decorate their fingers and toes.

A grandmother in our congregation felt compassion for a young woman who was mourning the fact that she was about to be evicted from her house, that she was not able to make the payment for her car, and that she couldn't take her children to the county fair due to lack of money. The grandmother gave some money to the young

mother to relieve some of the pressure.

Soon after, the young mother received a Pell Grant to pay for her educational needs. With the balance the young mother could have paid some of her debts. Instead, she purchased an expensive cell phone and added a data plan so she could access Facebook and the Internet. As you can imagine, the donor was infuriated by her friend's misplaced priorities. Every taxpayer should share her fury.

Our drive down Main St. now leads us to the church parking lot on a Sunday morning. How many vehicles do you see that indicate the people inside are living in poverty? It may reveal, instead, that most Christians who claim they are unable to contribute more to the Lord's work would be more honest to admit that the issue is misplaced priorities.

Don't misunderstand. We aren't opposed to

pretty nails and nice cars. But the economic indicators we have observed in our drive down Main St. may have implications that are spiritual more than financial.

Most Christians in the U.S. have not even approached the threshold of sacrifice in their giving. As long as

we are paying for tattoos, pretty nails, luxury cars, video gaming systems and recreational equipment, we must admit we are giving out of our surplus. We are the ostentatious religious leaders in the account Jesus related about the poor widow (Mk. 12:41-44).

The reason many people have so little to offer God is that they have made poor choices. If we practiced what the Bible teaches by giving to God before we give to ourselves, we would discover we have plenty left to provide what is truly needed in and for life.



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