

# Recession proof: Don't be aloof ... when giving!

By Pr. Daniel J. Carlson of Charlestown, R.I.

*Aloof / adjective: having, showing a lack of friendliness or interest in others*

*Aloof / adverb: at a distance*

In his book, *Finding God in the Questions*, Dr. Timothy Johnson (ABC TV News medical editor) concludes, "The questions that won't go away can be hard to live with unless you have a way of making peace with uncertainty." True indeed, and how helpful such perspective in the present moment.



Pr. Daniel J.  
Carlson

What's **NOT** needed in a time of economic recession is withdrawal, pulling back from giving opportunities in fear when financial resources are threatened. What **IS** needed are givers who remember how their giving demonstrates interest in and concern for others, whose giving continues to reflect confidence in God's faithfulness.

Most of what I experience in my personal financial stewardship, i.e., giving in the context of faith, I first learned decades ago from my parents. Married in 1937, when Dad was earning 37 cents per hour as a hospital orderly, there was never a time in their 50 plus years of marriage when they didn't tithe. Even after Dad died and Mom eventually went on Medicaid, the \$50 per month she was permitted by law to keep, that, too, was tithed. (**Note well:** My parents tithed, not because they had to – they didn't have to – but because they wanted to. In a word, they lived *gratefully*.)

To be sure, a recession of the current magnitude presents more than the usual number of challenges. Confidence in the relative friendliness of plastic may give way to more than last year's anxiety about the monthly credit card bill. A sense of job security may be replaced by fear of having no job at all. Uncertainty about a few things in daily life may be overtaken by uncertainty about more and more things. All of which affects our attitude toward giving. And, attitude being a core component about how life is lived in general, it's downright crucial when it comes to giving in particular.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow observed, "No man is so poor as to have nothing worth giving." Not exactly a biblical dictum to be sure; then again, perhaps that's just as well. If a person best remembered for his poetry is conscious of the human gifting potential even in limiting circumstances, what of the person of faith whose Holy Writ assures, "I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears"? (Psalm 34:4)

Be the time certain or uncertain, faith itself is no panacea. Congress has not enacted *HR1007: Tanking Economy / Accelerated Faith* to address current economic ills. Rather, faith is faith, another word for which is *trust*. People of faith are a trusting people, trusting God not only to “prosper the work of our hands” (Psalm 90:17b), but also to encourage us in our giving financially both to the church and to worthy causes in the larger community. Is it not possible that having less, or the threat of having less, may lead to the growth of one’s gratitude-attitude and thus of one’s giving?

The bottom line? Faithful financial stewardship during a recession may depend partly on psychology (read Peter Singer, *Newsweek*, March 9, 2009, page 48), but it is not rocket science. However, a certain thrust – translated *trust* – is a factor. For what thrust is to a rocket’s performance, trust is to a person’s generous, consistent, growing giving, financial and otherwise. And, in life’s grand design, even rocket science is outdistanced by the day-to-day influence of our giving.

Amidst our Easter alleluias, let our financial stewardship reflect a vital trust in the God who raised up Jesus from death!

*The Rev. Daniel J. Carlson, who retired in 2006, is serving as transitional pastor at St. Mark, Woonsocket, R.I.*

*Posted 04/28/09*