Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Living in God's Economy

Session Five – Case Study

Case Study: *The Example*

A pastor wrote the following in an article for his congregation's monthly newsletter.

> One of the key elements in helping a congregation to be generous is that the Pastor and his family must be generous. (My wife) and I return 25% of our income to this congregation. We have been doing that for six years....most of our charitable giving comes to church. We do support other causes with an additional 5% of our income. So we have learned how to live on 70% of what we are paid.
>
> I don't want you to think that that's a problem. It is not. We have everything we need and are richly provided for by God. I wish to be a good example to you of the generosity of God.
>
> I don't tell you that to get a pat on the back or to be prideful. Actually, I have to confess it wasn't my idea. As we began the Capital Campaign, (my wife) said what she thought we ought to give. I promptly told her, "We don't have that type of money."
>
> Some of you know that (my wife) works a lot more off of faith than I do. I have to wrestle with God a lot before I come to obedience. So she let me wrestle and God convicted me. I submitted to His direction and we agreed to a gift.
>
> Giving is really a process. First we learn to respond to God. Then we learn to respond regularly. Once we have acquired the habit of a regular response, we want to begin to look at what percentage of our income we are returning to Him.

- What stewardship issues are involved here?
- What do you think about the example the pastor and his wife are giving and the way in which they are giving it?
- What are the stewardship responsibilities leaders (clergy and lay) have when it comes to being an example to the whole congregation?

Case Study: *The Car*

A Lutheran pastor writes on his blog:

Here's a little stream of consciousness type post to give us something else to think about…

So I pull into the hospital parking lot today to make a call and one of the three clergy spots is filled with a brand new BMW. I didn't look that close. It was probably a 5 Series (starting at 45k) but could have been a 7 series (starting at 70k), I am not sure. I am not that much into cars.

Our church is in a fairly well to do area…that is mostly new and mortgaged money and not old and seasoned. I suppose a pastor on a decent salary, if he saved his pennies, could afford a fancy car in his years close to retirement. It's not that big of a deal. So, what do you think?

Oh and by the way, the license plate frame on the back said "Got Christ? If not, Hell is Mighty Hot."

Responses to the blog included the following two statements:

First, which is a more significant "image" that a pastor's car projects:

1. A BMW of any vintage?

2. A 1993 Ford Fairlane with 297,000 miles on it, clear-coat gone, rust galore, and bald tires?

Second, the license plate frame bothers me more than the car. These "cute" bumper stickers and church signs are Law, Law, Law and irritate me. "If YOU do something, you are okay with God." Maybe I'm reading too much into this, but having grown up Methodist, I think I know what is being said.

- What stewardship issues are involved?
- How would you respond to someone who brought this to your attention?

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