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Finding Your Economic Compass in an Economic Mess (Part 1)

Intro: We live in some challenging economic times. Share statistics: What should our response be? Panic / Fear / Despair? How do we find some economic direction in this economic mess we're in?

Our economic compass needs to be pointing towards the God who provides for us. If it is pointing anywhere else, we will be lost! Too many people leave God out of their practical lives. I can't think of anything more practical than money / finances / jobs / economics. God wants us to point our lives towards Him during these times

HOW? How do I point my life-compass towards Christ in these economic times?

- Over the next 2 weeks, I want to give you 6 navigation points to follow.
- II Kings 6-7 – Elisha and the besieged city of Samaria. You want a story of an economic mess! – Approx. 840 BC / Nation of Israel divided / Northern capital of Israel called Samaria – Jehoram is King / Syrian army is besieging the city – explain siege / famine and starvation is setting in / Food prices have skyrocketed! Economic / political / spiritual mess! - (Summarize) As the Syrian army surrounds the city, starvation and famine is setting in. The King takes a walk.....

I. Difficult Times Are Part Of Life (We must accept this fact)

A. Embrace reality

- Life in ancient times could be very brutal. You had walls around your city for a reason. You could be attacked by neighboring kingdoms / drought / famine / was all part of life. It was a harsh reality.
 1. We must embrace certain realities of this life as well. Difficulties are going to be the NORMAL part of life. Difficulties are the rule, not the exception to the rule.
 2. We live in such prosperity, we have it so good; we are used to so much blessing that we think there is something wrong when things are tough.
I Peter 4:12 "Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you." (NLT)
 3. Often, we think it is strange. We think it is wrong. We believe it shouldn't be

happening. Honestly, when I drive by the gas station and see almost \$5 a gallon, that is not a reality I want to embrace. \$50 in my truck and the needle barely moves...I'd rather complain.

4. Embracing reality doesn't mean we're happy about the difficulties, but it does mean there is an acceptance of them. There are just certain economic realities none of us can change. We might as well accept them!
5. The Bible tells us that since we live in an evil fallen world, pain – discomfort – hardships are the normal part of this life. That is a reality we must embrace or we'll never be able to accomplish the next step.

B. Check your attitude (negativism)

- King walking on the wall and one of his subjects asks him for help.

II Kings 6:27 "If the Lord doesn't help you, what can I do? He retorted." (NLT)

1. Now the king had some good reasons to have a negative attitude. The situation was horrible. PLUS, he was convinced God had abandoned him and his people. He had given up hope.
 2. I think it's easy for us to fall into the same negative attitudes over the economy. I know I have struggled with my share of bad attitudes over the past 6 months.
 3. We have to be careful not to develop a negative – complaining attitude. If we leave God out of our economic equation, we will get negative pretty fast.
 4. What's the big deal with being negative and complaining? I have every right to complain! Things are horrible / my situation stinks / I didn't tell you to deny reality. What I'm telling you to do is NOT to deny God!
 5. Complaining and negativity is a denial of God. Complaining is demonstrating faithlessness. It is a refusal to see God in your circumstances.
 6. The best example of this is in the OT with the nation of Israel as they were in the wilderness for 40 years. (explain) – In the book of Hebrews, complaining and a lack of faith are synonymous! (Didn't enter because of their unbelief!)
- Gal. 5:22-23 "But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..." (NLT)*
7. We can have the circumstances control our attitudes or we can have the Holy Spirit. If there was ever a time for believers to demonstrate a different attitude to the world it is now. If there was ever a time for us to shine bright, it is now.

C. Decide to grow

James 1:2-4 "Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything." (NLT)

1. There is no doubt that we are living in a time where our faith is being tested.

Does God really care about the economic problems? Does He care about my finances? Does He care that I might not have enough this month?

2. Our response during these times will determine how we experience answers to those questions. We can choose to be faithless and complain – shake our fists at God and man. OR, we can choose to grow. Give God an opportunity!
3. I believe that we have an incredible opportunity to grow individually and as a church. We have a chance to experience God in ways we never have. We have a chance to see God answer these questions in a very personal way.
4. BUT, we have to yield ourselves to Him during these times. We have to stop resisting what He wants to accomplish in our lives. He wants to show you things you’ve never seen before.
5. So many people have never experienced God in real tangible ways. They’ve never experienced Him providing for them financially / in a material way / job / food and clothing / even bless them with extra during lean times.
6. Will you decide to grow? Can you tell God today that you will cooperate with Him in whatever He wants to show you? This is the key. You don’t have to grow...it’s your choice. Aren’t you curious what God may do?
 - This is all part of accepting difficulties as part of life.

II. Difficult Times Create Dynamic Opportunities

- If you like sporting events, you know that the ones you remember the most are not the blow-out victories, but the dynamic ones...the impossible comebacks...the improbable heroes...the miracle play
- In II Kings 6-7, you couldn’t get much more improbable. (Besieged city / famine / starvation / cannibalism / It couldn’t get much worse! Hopelessness!
- Elisha promises deliverance and an economic turnaround in one day!

II Kings 7:2 “The officer of the king said to the man of God, ‘That couldn’t happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven!’” (NLT) IMPOSSIBLE!

A. God loves the impossible (biblical model)

1. God tells a couple (Abraham and Sarah – 90 yrs old) they are going to have a baby – *Gen. 18:14 “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” (NASB)*
2. Delivers possibly 3 million Jewish slaves from Egypt without a fight. Feeds them in the desert for 40 years.
3. God tells Israel to march around a city for 7 days until the walls fall down flat.
4. Uses a teenage shepherd boy to kill a 9 ft. Philistine giant with a sling shot!
5. Please understand it is not God creating the impossible situations; they are just part of life. He loves to show up in the midst of them.
6. Maybe you feel like you’re in the middle of an impossible situation. God didn’t create it / you didn’t create it, but you find yourself in the middle of it!
7. God has not abandoned you just because you find yourself in this type of

hopeless circumstance. He is poised to invade it, if you give Him the chance!

- Why does God love these types of situations?

B. Dynamic results leave little confusion

- There was no doubt in the story who provided for the city.
 1. When God shows up in a big way, it leaves little confusion over who gets the credit / or if it was just luck / fate / chance / human ingenuity / human effort
 2. Some of you know what I'm talking about. You've seen God show up in your life providing for you in ways that left no confusion that it was supernatural.
 3. Story of God providing our house (share) God cares about your desires!
 4. Story of God providing for Foothills (the rocks)
 5. I have such a burden for us to experience this together as a church. For us to see God move in a dynamic way in our midst so there is no doubts. To see the faith of this church explode to new levels.
 6. It's time for some new stories! "I was there when God did that!"

C. Dynamic results change lives

1. It's hard to stay the same when you experience the reality of God in your life. When you see God come through in tangible ways. When God intervenes at the point of your need. It changes you!
 2. It also impacts the world God has called us to reach. When others around you witness the hand of God upon your life / witness His provision / witness your peace while others are stressed, it creates opportunity.
 3. "How are you surviving so well?" Let me tell you about my God who provides! How can your church move forward while others are scaling back? Let me tell you about God!
 4. It gives us a chance to brag about God! I love doing this!
- How do I respond so I experience dynamic results?

III. Difficult Times Require Dependence On God

- HOW?

A. Quit telling God it's impossible

1. This is what the officer of the king did. He refused to believe God could change the situation. Because of his refusal to believe, he never got to enjoy any of the blessing.
2. How often do we miss out on experiencing the fulfillment of God's promises because we simply refuse to believe? We don't believe He will provide / we don't believe He will bless us financially / we may not even believe He cares that much about our struggles.

Heb. 11:6 “So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that there is a God and that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.” (NLT)

3. It’s the second part of this verse we usually struggle with. Not the existence part...BUT the rewarding part! Many Christians just don’t believe God rewards obedience and intimacy with Him. Seeking God.
4. Please notice the pre-requisite for reward...Sincerely seeking Him. Most people today want the reward without the relationship. It doesn’t work that way!
5. I believe the Christian community in general is missing out on seeing the power of God today for the simple reason they are telling God it’s impossible. They don’t believe He is a Rewarder! He’s not worth it!
6. What are you telling God is impossible? What circumstance / situation / financial crisis / are you refusing to believe God will show up and do something miraculous in?
7. Are you willing to sincerely pursue God and believe He is the rewarder / the provider / He is still in the business of doing the miraculous. Think about what you could be missing?

B. Quit trying to scheme your way out of it

II Kings 6:33 “...Why should I wait any longer for the Lord?” (NLT)

1. This does not mean that we have no responsibility in the midst of tough economic times. We all have to tighten up our spending to some degree. We need to be wise with the resources we do have. But, we shouldn’t assume all the responsibility for our provision. Once again we leave God out of the practical needs of our lives.
 2. Sometimes, no matter what you do, you can’t get yourself out of the hole you’re in or the circumstances that life has dealt you. We must embrace what responsibility we do have and learn to trust God for the rest.
- *Zech. 4:6 “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit’, says the Lord.” (NASB)*
 - *Ps. 127:2 “It is vain for you rise up early and retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.” (NASB)*
3. I can’t tell you how often over the years I have knocked myself out trying to provide for things that God would have just given to me if I would have asked.
 4. Be wise with what you have / make changes where you need to / then ask God for the rest.

C. Watch in faith for God’s provision

1. In II Kings 7, after Elisha promises deliverance, nobody really believed him / no one was looking for the answer / no one was preparing. It took 4 desperate lepers to discover God’s answer. God used 4 of the most hopeless people in the city – 4 starving lepers. May we not have to get so desperate to find God!

2. Jesus told His disciples to “watch and pray”. I think often we forget the watching part. Watching is a demonstration of faith. Watching means that you are anticipating something...you believe something’s coming.
3. Some of you went to mail box each day anticipating those stimulus checks a few weeks back. You were promised they would show up and so you opened that mailbox with some anticipation. Something’s coming!
4. This is how we should pray. Not pray and forget...BUT pray and anticipate. God’s provision is coming. Watch for it!

These are tough economic times. Where is your economic compass set? Who is it pointing at? Who are you trusting in? Let’s remember...

- Difficult times are part of life (reality / attitude / grow)
- Difficult times create dynamic opportunities (God loves the impossible)
- Difficult times require dependence on God (Quit telling God it’s impossible – quit scheming – start praying with anticipation.)