

"Ten Reasons Why THE LORD Will Bring Every CHRISTIAN Ministry

Through Periodic Financial 'Straits'"

(A Publication Of "The Inner-city Church Planting Mission")

Introduction: From the very inception of The Inner-city Church Planting Mission (I.C.P.M.) in November of 1980, we as a ministry have been privileged and blessed to experience periodic times of financial "straits". That is, times where the finances were so "tight" that we had to literally scrape pennies together to pay a particular bill that was due that day. The time spans have varied in length anywhere from a period of a few days to many months! We can definitely and honestly say that these have been times of privilege and blessing because of the many spiritual benefits that the LORD has bestowed upon us because of these "straits".

Following are ten of these benefits that the I.C.P.M. has been blessed with as it has gone through those financial "straits". Because GOD has used these in such a powerful way and because it seems as if some of these benefits will come by no other means, we as a ministry can expect and indeed look forward to, many, many more of these times.

1. To Cause Us To Search Our Thoughts And Lives To See If There Is Any Wickedness And Uncleaness There.

It has been my experience as someone who is part of this ministry, that when finances are "tight", it highly motivates us as a ministry to really examine our motives, attitudes, actions and thoughts, whether they are of the LORD or not. When bills are due and support is needed for those of us who are full or part-time staff and the money is not there to pay them, we must be sure that GOD is not holding back the funds because of sin.

"Search me O GOD and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Psalm 139: 23-24

Application: When we as a ministry are being brought through these times of financial "straits", the first thing we should do is fall on our knees and cry out to GOD and ask HIM to shine HIS searchlight of conviction upon our hearts and lives to see if there is any wickedness that must be confessed and repented of.

2. To Break Us Of Our Pride In Relationship To The Ministry

It is so easy for us to fall into the trap of wanting to build a ministry for our sakes and for our glory instead of for the glory of JESUS CHRIST. When we as a ministry have plenty of funds, it is much easier for us to spend this money to promote our causes. However, when the finances are "tight", this forces us to evaluate why we're doing a particular program or aspect of the ministry, whether it is for JESUS CHRIST or for us.

"Yea, all of you. . . be clothed with humility, for GOD resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of GOD, that HE may exalt you in due time." I Peter 5b-6

Application: It is our responsibility to humble ourselves. Then, if GOD wants us to receive some recognition, HE will do it.

3. To Break Us Of Our Self-will In Relationship To The Ministry

This point is very similar to #1, but different in that it is addressing our fleshly will rather than our pride. This is another trap that is very easy for us as ministers of GOD to fall into. That is, desiring to build and expand a ministry in our way and in our time instead of the LORD's. Again, when we as a ministry have an abundance of finances, it is much easier for us to do this. If we as a ministry are guilty of this, GOD may diminish the funds that are coming in to cause us to re-evaluate why we're wanting to build or expand, and to stop this self-will from continuing.

*"Commit thy way unto the LORD, trust also in HIM, and HE shall bring it to pass." Psalm 37:5
(See also Psalm 127:1; Matthew 26:39)*

Application: As we learn to walk closer and closer to the LORD and be sensitive to HIS SPIRIT, HIS will becomes our will and our own self-will disappears.

4. To Show Us That We Are Worshipping The Ministry Instead Of THE LORD.

It is a very great evil that we would worship anything or anyone other than the LORD JESUS CHRIST! Even a good and righteous thing such as the ministry. Yet this is what can so easily take place if we are not alert in our spirit.

*"Thou shall have no other gods before ME.
Thou shall not bow down thyself to them,
nor serve them, for I THE LORD THY GOD am a
jealous GOD..." Exodus 20:3,5a*

If we are guilty of this idolatry, one means GOD can use to get our worship back on HIM is a time of financial "straits".

Application: As we learn to put GOD first in every area of our life (including ministry), we experience true success in all that we do.

5. To Show Us That We Are Delighting In The Ministry Instead Of THE LORD.

When we are involved in ministry, be it full-time, part-time, or on a strictly volunteer basis, we should thoroughly enjoy it. However, if we are enjoying the ministry more than spending time and getting to know JESUS CHRIST, this is sin.

"Delight thyself also in THE LORD, and HE shall give thee the desires thine heart." Psalm 37:4

Application: As we desire to get to know the LORD better, HE then blesses our life (including our ministry), and even gives us, "...the desires of (our) heart."

6. To Show Us That We Are Neglecting Our Wives.

This point could be applied to our whole family (i.e.- children) as well, but we will only address our marriages here.

Just as it is easy to put the ministry ahead of THE LORD, so it is easy to put the ministry ahead of our wives. This is not Biblical. If we do this consistently over a period of a number of years, this can cause real conflict in the marriage relationship and this may affect our ministry in a negative way as well. Without a strong marriage, we will not have a strong ministry! If we are digressing into this evil pattern, GOD may send times of financial "straits" to get our attention, and thus our focus on the proper priorities.

"Likewise, ye husbands dwell with (your wives) according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered."
I Peter 3:7

Application: As our relationship to the LORD (first), is strong, and our relationship to our wives (second), is as well, this will make for a strong foundation for our ministry as well.

7. To Motivate Us To Clear Our Conscience And Make Restitution.

To have a clear conscience means to have the ability to look every person in the eye knowing that not one of them can point a finger and say, "You wronged me and you never tried to make it right." The Scriptures speak of the importance of a clear conscience for spiritual leaders when it says . . .

"A bishop then must be blameless... holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."
I Timothy 3:1a,9

Sometimes acquiring a clear conscience will include making restitution to the person or persons we have wronged. That is, not only asking for their forgiveness, but also paying them back for damaged property, stolen articles, wasted time, etc. . . .

8. To Bring About A Greater Unity Among The Spiritual Leaders.

This has always been a wonderful benefit from our times of financial "straits". For when GOD has brought us to these times, especially the longer periods, this has compelled us as spiritual leaders to draw closer together in prayer, fasting and fellowship.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this special bonding that comes when fellow CHRISTians experience these financial "straits" together, when he allowed the Philippians, (who had given to him during a particular time of financial "need"), in the fourth chapter of his New Testament letter to them. . .

"Notwithstanding ye have well done that ye did communicate with my afflictions. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my needs."
Philippians 4:14-16

Application: May future times of financial "straits" always be a signal for us as spiritual leaders to draw closer to each other in unified prayer, fellowship and encouragement.

9. To Teach Us A Greater Faith And Dependence On THE LORD.

This has always been another wonderful benefit from the financial "straits" GOD has called us to go through. For naturally, when we are in the midst of these times, they compel us to lean more upon HIM and less upon others and ourselves. The Apostle James spoke of this truth when he said . . .

"Hearken, ye beloved brethren, hath not GOD chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of kingdom which HE has promised to them that love HIM." James 2:5

Application: With this kind of great benefit, we can expect THE LORD to take us through these "straits" time and time again, both as a ministry and as individuals.

10. To Enrich Our Prayer Life.

When we as a ministry are brought through these times of financial "straits", these times naturally drive us to our knees in prayer, compelling us to cry out to GOD for financial needs to be met! When JESUS instructed us as to how to pray concerning the everyday needs in our lives, HE commanded us to ask THE FATHER...

"Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew 6:11

Application: We as a ministry should not expect great excesses of wealth, for when this happens, we naturally have a tendency to neglect times of real fervent prayer. In contrast, financial "straits" always foster this type of prayer.