

Have You Ever Fallen Into These Habits That Do More Spiritual Harm Than Good?

The minimum wage is an example of a misguided policy which does more harm than good, even if it was implemented with the best of intentions. For more than 200 years, the majority of economists have recognized that a mandated minimum wage, which is higher than the market rate, harms workers, businesses and the public. Unemployment increases. Businesses raise prices, reduce costs, substitute capital for labor, move and go out of business.

The current federal minimum wage is \$ per hour, which means that everyone must pay their workers at least \$. However, many states and cities have minimum rates which are higher than the federally mandated level. In 2018 alone, 18 states raised their minimum wage rates. San Francisco is scheduled to have a rate of \$15 per hour on July 1, 2018. Other states and cities have passed laws which will incrementally increase their minimum wage rates to \$15; most by 2022 or 2023.

When a state or city raises their minimum wage rate, businesses must scramble and reevaluate their situation. Is their current business model viable? Will customers accept higher prices and/or lower service from fewer employees? Are robots viable? Do they need to move? Should they close their business? Employees that keep their jobs benefit from higher wages. Workers who lose their jobs and the public that pays higher prices or loses services are worse off. The extent of the adjustment depends on the size of the increase in the mandated wage rate.

A recently released study by David Neumark and Brittany Bass of the University of California-Irvine and Brian Asquith of

the NBER shed light on the minimum wage and welfare benefits. The researchers found that, "each \$1 increase in the minimum wage has, in disadvantaged neighborhoods over the past three decades, increased poverty rates and the receipt of public assistance by roughly three percent." They also found that the long-term effect of more generous welfare benefits is to increase poverty and the receipt of public assistance.

Even though the legislators passing and implementing a minimum wage policy may have pure motives, the results are counterproductive. Decades of research have shown higher minimum wages result in higher unemployment, a less stable and possibly less viable business community and higher prices, fewer services and/or less choice for consumers. Policy-makers should ensure that they do no harm.

As believers, we should do our best not to cause harm. The majority of Christians will not cause harm to others on purpose. However, harm is often unintentional. Actions cause consequences. Unintended consequences may cause unintended harm. Some of our actions as church leaders that can cause unintentional harm are listed below.

- We may dilute our messages so fewer people feel threatened. Unintended harm: lives are more open to deception, believers fail to mature, more want-to-be disciples fail to experience the fruitful life He promises and/or fewer people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.
- To increase church rolls, we invite all who believe in Jesus to join our church even if they have core theological errors. We sometimes think their beliefs will become more biblical after they have been members for a while. Unintended harm: they may lead others astray with their beliefs and/or others who know them may judge your church's doctrines with their beliefs.
- We ignore open and blatant sin in the church. We pray they will change. Unintended harm: Others mistake our

inaction as approval of the sin, and/or the offender may encourage others to sin.

- We use the Bible to teach the dangers of sin and the need for holiness. Unintended harm: this true message can cause hopelessness unless paired with the solution. Jesus is the solution, and the cross is the answer. The sheep need to be taught the benefits of the cross through faith and repentance.
- We provide material assistance. Unintended harm: can enable and create dependency. In addition to immediate help, we need to be able to minister to their spiritual needs and direct the individuals toward additional material solutions. Although many churches do not have the resources to provide all solutions, all should be able to at least direct the person to further help.

As Christians, there are untold ways to unintentionally harm others. We can cause harm with too much help or too little help; with too much advice or too little advice; with too much listening or too little listening; with too much direction or too little direction; and with too much correction or too little correction. If we sincerely do not want to cause harm to others, how do we do it? We do it by allowing the Spirit of Christ to flow through us like rivers of living waters flowing from our innermost being.

Many people have strong beliefs about the Holy Spirit. Some believe that the Holy Spirit's role and functions are the same as in the early church, and others believe His gifts and miracles are only for the past. Most ministers will not speak against Him, but some do not actively seek or teach about the Spirit. The unintended consequence of this neglect is that their families, church and communities are harmed because they do not experience the full power, compassion and guidance of the Spirit, whom Jesus died to send us. Do no harm.

"Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk

in the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking one another and envying one another" (Gal. 5:24-26). {eoa}

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