

# Kingdom Economics: How to Overcome Conflicting Signals in This World

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released a much stronger than expected June Employment Report. Non-Farm Employment (the monthly increase in jobs) was 372K, compared to 384K in May and pre-report expectations near 270K. Private employment was 381K, compared to 336K in May and pre-report forecasts of 240K.

Average hourly earnings increased 5.1% from a year ago (still less than inflation), a drop of 0.2% from May's estimate. At 34.5 hours per week, average weekly hours worked remained unchanged from May. The percentage of the working age population which were part of the labor force (called the participation rate) dropped to 62.2% from 62.3% in May.

BLS collects employment data from two types of surveys, the Payroll (or Establishment) Survey and the Household Survey. The Payroll Survey collects data from 131K businesses and government agencies while the Household Survey collects data from 60K households. There are several differences between the two surveys, but one of the major differences is that the Payroll Survey counts payrolls—if an individual is drawing wages from three different jobs, then all three are counted. The Household Survey only counts a person once. There can be significant differences between the survey results.

The two surveys represented in the May report gave different pictures of the economy. The Payroll Survey showed that total employment was up 372K, but the Household Survey reported that total employment was down 315K. The Household Survey showed a decline in full-time and part-time workers, but an increase in multiple job holders.

Possible reasons for the discrepancy include the multiple job holders which are counted separately in the Payroll Survey, or possibly the seasonal factors used to adjust the estimates. Regardless, conflicting signals indicate caution should be taken in interpreting the report. The stock markets increased sharply the day the report was released but fell back by the end of the day as traders reevaluated their initial optimism.

Our impact in the kingdom and our fruitfulness depends, to a large extent, on how we navigate the conflicting signals we face every day. Conflicting signals can originate between the signals of light and the schemes of darkness. They can also originate with media that has a political agenda, economists with a bias, politicians attempting to confuse or a multitude of other reasons.

For individuals, apparent conflicting signals could originate with us. We might not be diligent to get all the facts or have blind allegiance to a party, news source or individual. We also might be failing to strengthen our relationship with the Lord by not studying our Bible, not praying enough, failing to walk in the Spirit, or sin.

Regardless of the source, kingdom citizens have a great advantage in navigating through the world's conflicting signals if we act. We can eliminate any of the above hinderances by taking God-inspired action. The Lord promised that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth (John 16:13). The leading of the Holy Spirit often requires that we be in tune with the Spirit.

A good example of combining action with the leading of the Holy Spirit is given by Paul. While on his second missionary journey, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. They then tried to go to Bithynia but were stopped by the Spirit. After arriving in Troas, the Holy Spirit intervened and sent Paul and Silas to Macedonia. Note that Paul knew the Spirit's voice and was listening.

“They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, after being forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; and passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and pleading with him, and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us,’” (Acts 16:6-9, NASB 2020).

The following principles will help in navigating the waters of conflicting signals:

1. Be a good steward. Get your information from a very trusted source with a good track record or a variety of sources.
2. Repent of any known sin.
3. Study the Bible. Some conflicting signals are clear if one understands the Bible. Studying your Bible will also increase your faith.
4. Pray regularly, unceasingly and in faith. Prayer is necessary to strengthen your relationship with the Lord, and to receive guidance.
5. Develop your relationship with the Holy Spirit. We are told to fellowship with Him.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all,” (2 Cor. 13:14, NASB 2020).{eoa}

**James R. Russell** *is a professor of economics at Oral Roberts University.*