

Kingdom Economics: Align Your Behavior with Your Beliefs for Victory

Read Time: 3 Minutes 49 Seconds

Evidence is mounting that the slowing of the economy is accelerating. According to recent Federal Reserve data December industrial production fell 0.7% (-0.1% expected, -0.6% previously) for the largest monthly drop since September 2021.

Manufacturing production fell 1.3% (-0.3% expected, -1.1% previously) for the largest drop since February 2021. December capacity utilization dropped to 78.8% (79.6% expected, 79.4% previously) for the lowest since December 2021.

Retail sales fell 1.1% during December (-0.8% expected, -1.0% previously). Without autos, retail sales still fell 1.1% (-0.6% expected, -0.4% previously). Without autos and gasoline, retail sales fell 0.7% (-0.5% previously).

The slowing economy, with contractionary Fed policy, is causing inflation to drop, often faster than expectations. December producer inflation dropped to an annual rate of 6.2% (6.8% expected, 7.3% previously). Annual consumer inflation dropped to 6.5% (6.5% expected, 7.1% previously).

Even though inflation is falling, achievement of the Fed's goal of 2.0% inflation is likely to take many months and possibly a few years. Inflationary expectations change slowly. The economy will continue to weaken during 2023 with a moderate recession likely.

A volatile economy, domestic political division, geopolitical uncertainty and declining social mores (from a biblical

perspective) have placed the country and world in danger. As citizens of the kingdom of God, we can receive God-inspired supernatural guidance to navigate these troubled waters. We also have the answers the world needs.

To grasp the King's benefits in our lives, and to spread the good news to others, we need to align our beliefs with the Bible, and align our actions with our beliefs. Too many of today's believers do not have actions that correspond with their espoused beliefs. Others have beliefs that do not correspond with the Bible. Some even attempt to convert others to their unbiblical beliefs and actions. For a Christian, misalignment of biblical beliefs with our actions can be dangerous to our souls.

There appears to be something ingrained in all of us to cause stress or discomfort if our behavior conflicts with our beliefs. Psychologists call the phenomenon "cognitive dissonance" and happens among believers and nonbelievers alike. Cognitive dissonance has implications for the business world and for the kingdom.

According to psychologists, we have developed several defense mechanisms to reduce this stress from the conflict between our beliefs and actions. We can, and often will:

- Change our belief or change our behavior.
- Get new information to rationalize the conflict.
- Add additional beliefs or behaviors to justify the discomfort.
- Ignore the offending belief or behavior.

The business world sometimes uses the concept of cognitive dissonance to increase profits. A car salesman will regularly contact recent buyers to minimize any dissonance. They may tell them that they sold the car at too low of a price or congratulate them on their bargaining skills.

Marketers often attempt to either change beliefs or tie

current beliefs to their product. Managers attempt to change business culture so dissonance will help create the desired organizational behaviors. Economists may use cognitive dissonance to help predict acceptance of varied economic policies.

The relationship between belief and behavior is God ordained and biblical. "Cognitive Dissonance" may have been recognized by psychologists, but it describes the process God uses to bring us closer to Him. The Holy Spirit creates the dissonance and points us to Jesus as the only solution. The defense mechanisms recognized by psychologists also give warning signs and imply strategies to keep us moving closer to God.

When a Christian sins, the Holy Spirit brings conviction. The proper response is to change our behavior. We should humble ourselves, confess our sin to God, repent, and seek forgiveness. The Lord will forgive and restore us. But unfortunately, other responses are too often seen. For example, when Christians sin, they:

- May learn that many Christians engage in the same behavior and use that knowledge to justify their behavior.
- May back away from Christian fellowship and lifestyle.
- May change their beliefs to correspond with their sinful lifestyle.
- May believe that their sin is unforgivable and disqualifies them from future service in the kingdom.
- May engage in other good works to try to make up for their failings.
- May feel that they cannot change.
- May believe that since we are saved by grace behavior doesn't matter.
- May reject Christ and totally renounce their beliefs.

Un-repent sin creates conviction by the Holy Spirit. Many soothe the pain of that conviction with unbiblical beliefs,

withdrawal, depression, hopelessness or even additional wholesome works.

✘ As kingdom leaders, we need to ensure that we and our charges:

- Have beliefs based on ultimate truth. We need to teach the uncompromised Word of God emphasizing the expectation for Holiness and the promises of forgiveness when we repent.
- Feel loved. We need to make sure we are known for our love and go the extra mile to minister to every person.
- Have a support system of fellowship, counseling, prayer, and teaching.
- Attempt to model Christ in everything, teach the Word, and are led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Have a daily personal relationship with the King of kings.

“For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened,” (Matt. 7:8, NASB).

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