



Summer 2009

TRUE RICHES

BY GORDON BALS

If I asked each of you if you have been concerned about your finances or if you have had to make some changes this past year I am guessing many of you would answer in the affirmative. Just about everyone I know has had to make some adjustments to their lifestyle. All the change to our economy has reminded me all over again how much money is a key issue where we continually confront what we really believe about God. Our relationship with money is an area that significantly impacts the rest of our Christian life. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? (Luke 16:11)

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When I started Daymark 12 years ago I was terrified financially that it would be a disaster. I didn't have too much faith that God really cared about our needs. Yet, through the years wrestling with God over his provision for this ministry has been a humbling reminder that he really sees and cares. Daymark Pastoral Counseling is a non-profit organization. Years ago when Daymark was founded we wanted those who needed our services but could not afford the going rate for a counseling session (\$115 an hour in Birmingham) to still be able to come for counseling. It is our mission to make good pastoral counseling resources accessible to those who need them. To support this goal we applied for and later received non-profit status so others could make charitable contributions to support the ministry we do. Over the past decade 2/5 of our annual budget has been supported by charitable donations.

To simply pray and hope that God will provide through those who believe in what we do often feels crazy and this past year it began to seem a little foolish again as the economy worsened. However, through May of this year our giving has remained consistent with past levels. What a glorious surprise! Once again our faith has been refreshed and we are reminded anew that God cares. Obviously, part of the encouragement has been that we can continue to operate and give ourselves freely to those who come for counseling. The giving we receive affords us that honor and helps those who benefit from the sliding scale.

More than just being glad we can keep caring for those God sends to Daymark, the sacrificial nature of the giving in a tight economy confronts our unbelief in a new way. The majority of the people who support the work we do consider giving to their church as a foundational and non-optional priority and see their giving to Daymark and other 'para-church' ministries as secondary and optional. It is a conviction we support. However, that means as budgets have tightened and those who support us continue to choose to do that, we are the recipients of sacrificial giving. You will never know how that continued generosity propels us to keep giving ourselves to those who come for counseling. Thank you!

In addition to the encouragement that comes from financial support, our faith has been refreshed through the counseling we have been able to do during this time. Imagine that you are in the position where you have lost your job or that your need for counseling has come up during this time when most people are cutting back on their budget. What do you do? How do you pay for counseling and add \$115 - \$460 a month to your budget? It has never seemed as important that we are free to offer a sliding scale as we have been the past year. When a believer loses a job during a recession it is a perfect time for evil to throw doubt and accusation at a person. He will say things like, "You fool, look where your God has left you! Now you will not be able to provide for your family! Your God doesn't care about you! You are alone!" Such accusations are normal because evil loves to attack the vulnerable. Believers in these types of circumstances need to hear the Gospel in fresh and tangible ways. For Daymark to be

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free to respond in such moments through words and action is a way for God to remind his people that he has not forgotten them. Offering a sliding scale is a visible, demonstrative action that 'preaches' the Gospel and says something about God's kindness and mercy. What a privilege for us at Daymark to be a conduit of God's grace in time of need. Each of us is regularly encouraged as we watch the look on others faces soften as we discuss payment for counseling and they realize it is a workable situation.

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My hope in this time of financial stress is that we will all experience robust moments where we hear the Lord saying he has not forgotten us and taste 'true riches'. Worrying or obsessing over money is often a cover for deeper anxieties. The vast affluence America enjoyed for so long contributed to money becoming more of a God while at the same time causing us to trivialize how much money can be an indicator of what is going on in our hearts. Now it is a little easier to see how afraid we are of not having money or how afraid we are in general. In a land of abundance it is easy for money to be taken for granted as a constant in our lives. With some of it gone, a deeper need for the Lord can emerge.

In some ways I sense for many of the people connected to Daymark the financial collapse of the past year has not exposed so much fear and anxiety. Many people I know for years were giving to their church, friends and ministries like Daymark in such a way that the false security of money had been exposed. There is a way that regularly practicing the calling to liberally give all that we are prepares us for the times when we have to lean in and give more of ourselves. I realize some have had to make necessary and God inspired changes to your giving and there are those reading this newsletter who have lost their jobs and are as concerned about paying bills as they are about their ability to give in the year ahead. However, in whatever way each of you has continued to be generous in a financial atmosphere of apprehension I want to encourage you. Money is a window into our faith and can be a picture of what is going on in our soul. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? (Luke 16:11) The continued giving we have received this past year says to us that we walk with people who have the true riches of heaven moving around in their heart.



We wanted to thank you by asking several people who have benefitted from Daymark to describe their experience with you. Interspersed through the newsletter are comments from 3 people who were willing to share some of their story.

“Counseling with Bill at Daymark has been a tremendous blessing to both me and my fiancé. As a school counselor, I wanted true depth to our premarital counseling--not just an item to check of the list. As a Christian, I wanted scripture-based, Christ-centered counseling. With Bill at Daymark, I know that we have found all of this and more. And this has made all the difference in the world.

After leaving counseling, my fiancé and I almost always remark about the gift of wisdom and discernment Bill has been blessed with. Daymark allows us to be blessed by those gifts as well. We can take issues we have been struggling with and Bill can reframe them, help us to see the other's point of view, and help us reach a peaceful resolution. It is truly remarkable.

Daymark's commitment to scripture based counseling gives us a trust in the counseling that simply could not be found at other venues. The commitment to providing affordable counseling has allowed us to have more sessions than we would ordinarily have. Bill is more interested in us having a complete session than anything else and that comes across to us and increases the quality of our therapeutic relationship. We initially thought we would just do counseling before we got married and now are committed to continuing with counseling on a regular basis after marriage. We consider Daymark a blessing from the Lord.”

“Just over a year ago I felt like my life was falling apart. I had problems with my marriage, our finances, and my job. I tried to figure out how I could fix all of my problems b/c I had basically given up on God. This led me to make some bad choices that hurt those around me, especially my family. I eventually became very depressed and my heart continued to harden. This was apparent to all but me and I was encouraged by friends, family and my doctor to go and see a counselor. I didn't even consider it because I didn't think I needed one. I turned to many broken cisterns instead. Obviously they fixed things temporarily or they failed me completely. One day in late October the Lord moved my "biggest" broken cistern far away it turned my world upside down. It was at that point that I saw what a wreck I had become and I knew I needed help. I was desperate and scared because I now wanted to go see someone, but didn't have the means to do so.

Despite all my fear and uncertainty I called Daymark. I talked with Gordon about our financial situation and he told me about the sliding scale. This ministry allowed me to have the privilege of meeting with Julie. She reminded me of many truths that I had buried or simply chosen not to believe. She also called me on my excuses and my sin, but pointed me to the gospel every time. During our time He has opened my eyes to see that I truly am a well provided for daughter of Christ. And I have been freed from my performance because my righteousness is in His work alone. Although I have been a Christian for a very long time, I have never heard the Gospel more clearly and experienced it more fully. Obviously I still face challenges. The difference is that I am now able, by His grace alone, to walk in them, struggle through them, and find peace in Him. This ministry has allowed me to rest in the fact that whatever comes my way is His perfect plan for me. I have never loved Him, longed for Him, or trusted Him more.”

“I first began coming to Daymark Counseling, and meeting with Gordon, as a 22-year-old single mother. My engagement had just been broken off with my 1-year-old's father. I was working three part time jobs, and my son and I were living with my parents. I was incredibly lonely and very broken inside. I was very vulnerable and slowly, evil began feeding me lies and hardening my heart towards God's kindness. I knew that God loved me, and I knew that He was there, but I didn't know how I had gotten where I was, and I didn't know how I felt anymore. I was lost... I didn't know who to turn to, where to go, or what to do next. One thing, which was heavily laid on my heart, was hearing older friends of mine talk about what an incredible man and counselor Gordon was to them and how much he truly helped them.

I remember the first meeting with Gordon. I walked out of my session that day feeling like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I was truly dumbfounded about the peace that filled my heart as I walked out that door, and I knew that I would be okay. In my sessions, not only did I feel that someone cared and that someone would listen, I also received guidance and counseling through God's word flowing out of Gordon's mouth. There were times in my sessions that Gordon stopped me, in the middle of my sentences, in order for me to acknowledge my hurt, let him feel my hurt with me, and take some of that burden off of my shoulders. Other times, he has stopped me from talking in order to point out a situation that he wants me to be proud of, and take a couple of minutes to be proud with me. There were a couple of times that I opened up about something that made me feel so ashamed... I didn't think I would be looked at in the same way. But instead, Gordon would look at me with tears in his eyes and let me know that I couldn't shame myself, and that I couldn't listen to evil's lies. Gordon's sincere heart and kindness, gave me a small taste of the love that God really does have for me. God knew that I would never get things right in life, but He loves me no matter what.

Meeting with Gordon every other week, would not have been possible without the financial help that I received. Thank you - to the people out there who donated to Daymark Counseling to help people like me. I didn't know how I was going to get out on my own, and still be able to receive the guidance and the counseling every other week from a person and a foundation that was: giving me hope, giving me guidance, teaching me God's word, helping carry my burdens, and making me feel loved. I wouldn't have been able to go as often as I would have liked without your help, so thank you so very much. My eyes are open and seeing God's true love for me, which began with a simple act of kindness (financial help) and a simple act of love (Gordon's caring heart and counseling through God's word).”



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For more information about Daymark
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“One must be poor to know the luxury of giving.”
George Eliot



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Daymark Pastoral Counseling is a non-profit organization designed to make the Gospel-centered pastoral counseling and teaching resources accessible to churches, couples, families and individuals. Gifts or financial contributions made to Daymark are tax deductible.

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