

## Cole-Lewis: How do I protect myself in a failing economy?

Contributed by Carol Cole-Lewis  
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How do I protect myself in a failing economy? This wasn't exactly the question I've been asking myself lately, though it is the one I think is on most people's minds.

The first thought that comes to me when I ask this question is "Protect myself from what?" I started thinking. Usually a need for protection comes out of a sense of a lack of something — in this case a lack of security that comes from a stable financial base. But, is this true? Can we really find true protection in "stuff"?

My spiritual heritage has its roots in the Christian tradition. Over the last couple of weeks, I've been meditating on the following verses in Matthew:

"Look at the birds of the air. They do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

"If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat' or 'What shall we drink' or 'What shall we wear.' For the pagans run after all these things, and your Heavenly Father knows that you need them.

But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." 6 Matthew 6:25-26; 28-33

Are you worrying about what you will eat or what you will drink or what you will wear? If you're a person of faith in a higher power, it isn't really useful to spend time concerned over these issues, as God already knows we need them. So, where then should the focus of our thoughts be if not on our desperate condition? On the Kingdom of God.

Right. Anybody got a road map to where this "Kingdom" is?

Well, actually, yes.

"The Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

OK. If that's the case, how do I know what part of me is the "Kingdom" and what is not? Actually, God gave the answer to Moses after Moses asked him, "Who should I say sent me?" God's answer? "Tell them 'I AM' sent you."

The Kingdom of God is when you are connected to the "I AM." And, what is the "I AM"? The only thing that there is — The Present Moment. The NOW.

Anytime you feel fear, anxiety, worry, guilt, anger, etc., etc., it's because you're living in a time-bound experience. These emotions imply a sense of time, as fear, anxiety and worry are rooted in an imagined future, while guilt and anger have their source in a remembered past. Neither is happening now (though your ego-mind would like you to think this is so).

When you're present, you experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (does this ring a bell with you Christians as the "fruits of the spirit").

How do you get and stay present? A few ways:

### 1. Acceptance and surrender

Allow the present moment to be what it is. Completely accept the situation as it stands. This does NOT mean you cave in and do nothing about it. Quite the contrary — by not judging the conditions you find yourself in, you bring a sense of clarity to the moment. This permits you to see things in a different, less emotionally charged, light from which a better course of action can be determined.

2. Gratitude  
I like to think of gratitude as the energetic opposite of "surrender." "Surrender" to me implies an inner acceptance of what appears to be an outward experience. "Gratitude" to me is the outward expression of an inner state of being derived from surrender. Having gratitude — or thankfulness — means you are OK with what is and is the natural result of Surrender.

3. Do not judge (anybody got a good antonym for "judge"? I couldn't find one!)  
Ever wonder why Jesus admonished, "Judge not, lest ye be judged"? I would dare say because we do not know the mind of God. What we deem to be good (or bad, or fat, or old or ugly ...) may not be so because we tend to look at the situation from our own small point of view rather than God's bigger picture. If you can cease to label an experience, you open up yourself to a wealth of possibilities only accessible by this freedom from your inner critic.

4. Give  
"Give, and it will be given to you. A large quantity, pressed together, shaken down, and running over will be put into your lap, because you will be evaluated by the same standard with which you evaluate others." (Luke 6:38 ISV)

Do you ever wonder why it feels so good to give? Because when we give, we are filled with a sense of abundance, not lack. And, don't just give money — give the most valuable item you own to everyone and everything: Your attention.

You say you're a Christian, a Buddhist, a Jew, a Muslim? All of these religions have these tenants at their heart. You're living as a "Pagan" (read: "Non-Believer") if you are not living in the Kingdom, and the only place you'll find the Kingdom is by being present now.

Enjoy the peace and abundance of the Kingdom of God!

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