



Avoiding the Black Friday Crisis ***truth about holiday shopping***

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The Friday after Thanksgiving has become known as the official start of the holiday shopping season. Today is called “Black Friday” to illustrate the fact that Christmas sales help many retail outlets climb out of the financial “red” of debt and into the “black” of profit. This holiday shopping simply shifts the responsibility of debt from the retail market to the consumer’s credit cards. And although the United States is in the midst of one of the worst economic downturns in modern history, billions of dollars will be spent in stores this weekend. Does this really help the economy?

The Gallup Research Group estimates that American adults will spend at least \$639 each on holiday gifts this year. That’s over \$1,200 spent by a family of two! Much of this money will be used on gifts given to other adults who would have been much happier to have pocketed the expense and not simply exchanged money with others. Dads will get neck ties that they will never wear. Many children will spend more time playing with the box their toy was wrapped in than with the toy itself. These same children are in essence taught that greed is an acceptable attribute when they make their tremendous toy lists for Santa Claus. And many parents will take out loans, work overtime, or run up credit card bills just to try to satisfy the insatiability of teens and toddlers. Doesn’t the \$450 billion dollar price tag of Christmas seem a bit much?

History tells us that the term “Black Friday” originates with several economic crashes that paralyzed our country. The phrase “Black Friday” was first used in 1869 to reference the day the United States stock market tumbled under the

Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant. During the civil war, the government issued large amounts of cash that was only backed with government credit. A few gold investors manipulated the market and down the stock market crumbled. Sound familiar? The 1929 “Black Friday” was when the European markets reacted to the fall of the New York Stock Exchange and the entire world was plunged into the Great Depression.

Some people suggest that gift giving at Christmas is supported by Scripture. That is not what the Bible teaches. Matthew 2:10-11 talks about the Wise Men following the star and arriving “at the house” and presenting their items to the “child.” The Wise Men arrived several years later and were not at the manger!

Today, the term “Black Friday” speaks of the day when retail stores advertise huge discounts in hopes to woo the Christmas crowd. Supermarkets go out of debt and individuals go into debt, all in order to celebrate the season of giving. Such spending is ironic as Christ himself said, ““Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions,” Luke 12:15. Christmas shopping doesn’t have to result in personal economic problems. Make a decision today to not spoil children or grandchildren with toys that they will soon forget. This year, do something as a family to help the needy instead of buying your grown siblings a gift they could easily live without. Use that same money, time, and effort to help others less fortunate. . Give the gift of charity by supporting a loved one’s favorite cause. Or create lasting memories with the family by doing something out of the ordinary. “Black Friday” is aptly named. This season can be a time to go farther into debt or to learn from past financial crashes and stop the greed.

