

Are you gifted?

(2 Corinthians 9:6-8, NKJV) *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*

I've always been impressed by the financial resources of this congregation. Any time money is needed for a project, whether it be a new heater or a new addition to the building, the money always comes. For this reason, I was particularly shocked as I watched our accounts drop deeper into the red. Because of the "money's always there" characteristic of this congregation, I have no doubt that we'll pull out of this, and quickly at that.

But the current debt is not a problem—rather, it's a symptom of a problem.

I don't believe that any sincere question can be called a "bad question," but sometimes questions tell us more than they ask. Have you ever asked (or heard asked), "How much should I give?" This is a sincere and good question, but the answer to this question cannot be found in Scripture because the Bible doesn't tell us how each Christian *should* respond to the gifts with which God has blessed him. That said, the Bible *does* answer the question, "How *can* I respond to God's rich blessings?" You see, the Law only condemns. It doesn't motivate. Only the Gospel will motivate Christians into service.

So, how much can you give? Give as God has blessed you. To each of us, He's given different gifts. To some, He has given money. To others, He's given various talents and skills. To others, He's given time. To most of us, we've received a combination of the three to various degrees. Having blessed us with these gifts, He calls us to use them for His kingdom. If you can give more money to the church, give it for God's glory. If you can make Jell-o or Taco Salad, then make Jell-o or Taco Salad for Jesus. If you can change lightbulbs, move tables, visit the elderly, or whatever your gifts, do it with all your heart for the Lord. Such actions are as pure and holy in God's eyes as a pastor distributing the Lord's Supper. More than what you do, though, the Lord emphasizes *how* and *why* we give. Give with all your heart, not out of compulsion, but because so much has been given to you by Christ.

And that's the key. Even though we don't give as we should, even though we take more than we give, and even though we don't put God first in our budgets and giving, He *still* loved us enough to send His Son to *pay* for our sin with His own blood and earn for us eternal life. He has forgiven our greed and selfishness and given us new life, no matter whether or how much we give. He has given it all to us.