

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

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Everyone struggles with the subject of giving. Some struggle every Sunday when the offering plate is passed. One question you will inevitably ask is: "When it comes to giving, how much is enough?" These four principles will help you answer that question.

Principle 1. It is enough when it meets the need.

This principle is illustrated in building God's house. When people were asked to bring items for the construction of the Tabernacle, "Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: 'No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.' And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work" (Exodus 36:6-7).

Principle 2. It is enough when it exceeds the expectation.

Some consider it "enough" to meet minimum basic requirements or expectations. However, Jesus taught us to go the "second mile." "If someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to anyone who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you..." (Matthew 5:40-42).

Paul commended the Macedonians because they exceeded his expectations: "And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will" (2Corinthians 8:1-5). When it comes to giving, God wants us to push the limits, not stop at them. "Enough" exceeds the expectation.

Principle 3. It is enough when it strains the resources.

"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on'" (Mark 12:41-44). Although Jesus did not state it, the implication is that the rich had not given enough, while the widow had. What made the difference? The degree of sacrifice.

When Paul directed the Corinthians on how much to give to distressed Christians in Jerusalem, he explained it like this, "And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work... according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality" (2Corinthians 8:10-13). His point? "Do what you can. Sacrifice, not to the point where you cannot survive, but as much as you can." One person put it this way, "The Lord measures giving, not by what we give, but by what we keep for ourselves; and the widow kept nothing, but gave all." [Alan Cole, Mark, *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* (London: Tyndale, 1969), p. 196]

Principle 4. It is enough when it satisfies the heart.

The final measure of “enough” involves the heart attitude. The amount of offering for the temple was a matter of the heart. *“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give...’”* (Exodus 25:1-2). Moses instructed that giving to the poor was a matter of the heart. *“Give generously to [the poor man] and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to”* (Deuteronomy 15:10).

In the New Testament, Paul also made the amount of each person's gift a matter of the heart: *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver”* (2Corinthians 9:7).

The Greek word for “enough” is also translated by “content.” On the one hand, the word expresses the idea that something is sufficient. On the other, it expresses an attitude that is satisfied with what is available. [B. Seide, “Suffice,” *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Collin Brown (ed.), Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), Vol. 3, p. 727].

God is not interested in gifts that are given under compulsion or begrudgingly. He wants us to have a good feeling about what we have done.

Conclusion

In conclusion let's run a test. Was what Christ's sacrifice for our sin enough?

Did it meet the need? *Hebrews. 7:22,24-26 “... Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant... Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need...”*

Did it exceed the expectation? *Romans 5:7-8 “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Did it exhaust the resources? *John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Did it satisfy the heart? *Matthew 3:17 “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”*

As you consider your gifts to the Lord and to others, is it enough...

- to meet the need?
- to exceed the expectation?
- to strain your resource?
- to satisfy your heart?