

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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God, Please Multiply the Gift

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When I was in elementary school, my parents bought the house next door to us. It had sat empty for years and was filled with antiques, old books, and lots of clutter. In the course of looking through the house and its contents, we discovered that the previous owners had been missionaries. We found old Bibles, books of poetry, journals, and letters that told of hardships on the mission field.

All of this was so exciting for a young boy. It was like being on a treasure hunt every day after school. We would go from room to room looking for hidden treasure. It was my hope to find some hidden treasure map or a box filled with valuables. While those dreams never materialized, something extraordinary did transpire.

One day while looking around, we came upon an offering envelope stuck neatly into a pigeonhole of an old desk. It was neatly sealed and dated as if prepared early in the week and placed in a special spot so that it would not be forgotten on Sunday. For some reason, either through death or ill health, the offering envelope never reached its destination.

We held the envelope up to the window and discovered there was a five dollar bill in it. At the time the money was placed in the offering envelope, five dollars was a lot of money, especially from a poor missionary couple. I am sure it was prepared with a prayerful spirit that God would in some way multiply it. Soon after my discovery of this intended gift, I placed five dollars in the offering plate of my home church to honor their request. Needless to say, the impact of that prepared gift left a lasting impression upon me. Deep within me, it planted the seed of giving.

I am confident they had no intention other than to support the Lord's work with that gift. They did not hide it away in that drawer hoping that someday it would be discovered and their generosity

acknowledged. It was just a normal part of their giving. Little did they know that decades later their gift would actually be used in the life of a young boy to motivate him to give.

In Luke 21:1, Jesus watched a poor widow give two mites into the treasury. Her gift was given to honor God and yet has forever been remembered in the pages of His Word, challenging generation after generation to give to the Lord's work. It seems the gift had a two-fold purpose: to both support the Lord's work and to motivate others to consider the same action.

In verse 3 of that same chapter Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all." When I ponder the five dollar gift that was seemingly misplaced in the story from my childhood, and then I ponder the return on that gift multiplied by what I have given and by the number of people that I have encouraged to give – suddenly "putting in more than all" makes a great deal of sense. Not only did the widow and the missionaries give sacrificially, they gave a gift that was multiplied generation after generation.

Who are you encouraging to give through the quietness of your actions? Do you understand that your act of obedience to God in giving is in some way being noticed and watched by others? I am not suggesting we advertise our generosity, but I am suggesting that even in the quietness of our giving, someone is noticing and possibly being challenged. Through that misplaced offering envelope, God eventually received the gift, and the prayer of the giver was granted: The gift was multiplied. Maybe it could multiply again through you.

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org