

# CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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## Should Your Pastor Discuss Your Giving With Others?

*Mark Robbins, CPA*

Which of the following gets a pastor in the most hot water?

- a. Changing the color of the carpet in the sanctuary
- b. Letting the teens clap with the choruses during worship
- c. Having outreach events in homes on Super Bowl Sunday
- d. Discussing what church members give with other church members

I'm sure you have heard of or experienced church situations involving the first three above. No matter what side of the issue you land on, everyone agrees that the Bible does not speak directly to those topics. Each side uses preferences and biblical principles to arrive at a decision.

What about the fourth situation: discussing what church members give with other church members? Would it surprise you to find out that the Bible gives guidance on this issue? You may not like the example provided.

The Apostle Paul spent most of his post-conversion life ministering to Gentiles and planting churches. He knew what it was like to have plenty and to be in want (Phil 4:12). During his travels he became acquainted with many cities, cultures, and people. He knew the churches and individuals he wrote to personally as well as their strengths and weaknesses. His epistles are filled with admonitions for his readers to grow in areas where they are weak.

The Corinthian church had some key areas in which to grow. One area Paul identified in 2 Corinthians was their need to give. But he did not simply tell them to give (which alone would have shocked some); he compared their giving to another group of Christians as both an encouragement and a rebuke:

*"Now brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the*

*churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (8:1-5, NASB).*

Many look at this passage as a wonderful testimony of the Macedonian Christians – and rightly so. However, we often fail to remember that Paul was not writing this positive example of stewardship to the Macedonians. He was writing it to their counterparts! Paul was not giving the Macedonians a pat on the back. He was giving the Corinthians a kick in the seat.

Would the Macedonians have cared that Paul used their giving history with others? I don't know, but Paul obviously felt it would be appropriate. Paul understood that your giving testifies to your personal values. In modern terminology, your checkbook displays your worldview – Christianity or materialism. Paul also understood that giving is not a private matter. Believers sometimes think that their giving is just between them and God. Wrong! Your giving is a testimony to others.

Does the Bible command pastors to tell what church members give? No. A wise pastor will apply this passage carefully. However, believers must stop thinking that their giving is just a personal matter. God doesn't think that, and other people are watching your giving. What do they notice?

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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](http://bbcfoundation.org); e-mail: [info@bbcfoundation.org](mailto:info@bbcfoundation.org)