

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Is Giving A Private Issue?

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Imagine that it is January. You receive a letter from your church, which should include your giving summary for the prior year. To your surprise, you receive someone else's giving summary because the mailing was compiled incorrectly. You now have juicy information on what another church member gave! You are intrigued until you realize that someone else in the church now has your giving summary. Ouch.

If someone else did receive your giving summary what would they notice? There are two items that always stand out on a giving summary:

- how frequently you give
- how much you give

If there are large gaps between gifts, you have not incorporated the discipline of consistent stewardship in your life. If the dollar amounts are small or range widely from gift to gift, you may be giving to God based upon your feelings – not upon a stewardship plan.

Even though other church members do not typically get our annual giving summaries, our giving is still never a secret. In fact, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church that our giving should not be a secret. The Corinthian church put themselves on record as desiring to help the needy church in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, they were not following through on their promise.

Paul wrote, "For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I have sent the brethren, that...you may be prepared; lest if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to speak of you) should be put to shame by this confidence" (1 Cor. 9:2-4, NASB).

Paul was sharing the giving intentions of the Corinthian church (in the region of Achaia) with the churches in the region of Macedonia. Paul did not consider giving a secret. He willingly shared giving information that would help people follow through on a promise or help others get motivated.

No one likes to look bad in front of others. The Corinthians were at risk of being embarrassed because of their lack of giving. Now the tough question – if someone received your giving summary from church, would you be embarrassed? Have you failed to follow through on your giving intentions? Have you failed to even establish some giving intentions?

You will be receiving your giving summary from your church and other ministries in about three months. Decide now to stop believing the lie that you can't give more because the economy is down. Effective stewardship depends on your heart and a good plan (budget) – not a rising stock market. Determine that you will establish consistent and generous giving to the ministries that impact your life. God will bless your giving (2 Cor. 9:6).

Your giving is not a secret to God – or others. What story do you want your giving to tell about 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