

When There's Too Much In The Collection Plate

Sermon Starter

Scripture: Exodus 36:6-7

Text: *"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, NIV)

Outline:

- I. When giving is only about the gift, there's a risk of missing the giver.
- II. Giving is about our relationship to God and each other.
- III. Giving's most basic question: What's it for?

Summary:

Here's a silly question: Is there ever such a thing as too much giving? When it comes to generosity, is the sky *always* the limit?

I once served as pastor at a church that took a Thanksgiving Day collection for an inner-city mission. The goal was to put a chicken in each food basket the mission gave away to the community.

Yes, it was fun saying, "Let's put a chicken in every basket!" But the real joy came from watching givers, both young and old, work together to surpass the previous year's giving total. Each year, the result was always the same — two or three chickens went in every basket, instead of just one!

So, what exactly is the problem here? By nearly any standard, three chickens in a basket is better than one. How is "too much giving" ever a problem, especially in the shadow of nagging need?

Any satisfying answer requires a shift in the giving's objective. Obviously, if the end goal of giving is always *the gift*, then there's never such a thing as too much. But when giving is viewed as a means for connecting, then yes, there are scenarios when too much can be collected.

Believe it or not, most of our giving is framed with this lens. That gift card you gave to your postal carrier at Christmas wasn't intended as compensation. Instead, it was a way to acknowledge and appreciate the person who provides you daily mail service — rain, sleet or snow.

It's about relationship.

Put your church's budget in these terms. It's a collection of gifts made to ministry, but at the end of each gift stands a giver. Each gift is an expression of a person's relationship to God and His people. Miss this fundamental truth, and their gift gets reduced to nothing more than digits on a line item.

Leaders must flip the narrative. Moses felt this pressure point in the wilderness while the Israelites gave gifts to construct the tabernacle. The finest goods people had to give — from fine wool, to gold and precious stones — were piling up in ridiculous amounts.

Moses raised the stop sign and declared enough was enough: *“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, NIV)

Having clarity on the *purpose* of giving is the only way a decision to *stop* giving gets made. Moses understood this. A spiritual community was being assembled there in the wilderness, and giving for the tabernacle was merely a way to cement the people together in worship and service.

This nearly forgotten scene from over 3,000 years ago raises a basic, but critical, question about the goal for any giving: *What’s it for?*

If there isn’t an answer, then gifts to your church are merely being thrown onto the “ministry-just-because” pile.

But a clear answer allows leaders to see the worshiper on the other side of each gift. And when there’s enough collected, it even makes it possible to say, “Enough. There’s too much!”