

## ***The Congregational Budget***

***And***

## ***The Widow's Mite***

One of the great organizing tools of civilization is the concept of budgeting. If you establish a budget then you can better control the use of your income and resources with more efficiency and predictability. To ignore the concept of budgeting is to invite economic disaster. Thus, parents begin early to teach their children to budget their allowances and other monies that they earn in various and sundry projects. When this economic tool of civilization is ignored by an individual or a group such as a company or a local church congregation, many financial pitfalls are soon evident as a result; individuals lose their possessions, businesses suffer serious reversals—go bankrupt, and local church congregations are left with little to show for their meager contributions.

The Lord's word is very clear that the families of God's adopted children are called upon to give a tithe or that is, a tenth of their income to His Church, most generally represented by the local congregation. Whether a given family or an average of the families who claim membership in such a local congregation actually give a tenth, is something most Protestant congregations do not know for certain. Protestant congregations are not accustomed to auditing the income of their local members to ascertain if they in fact tithe or do not tithe. All are encouraged to do so and blessings are promised for those who do, but it is basically a matter of honor. It is left up to the individual or family to know just how much they actually give of their income.

The Lord's word is also very clear that there are other gifts that are made by individuals and families other than the tithe. These are love offerings. The love offering is something that the individual or family does because there is something special that they feel especially motivated to share in financially. There is

no limit placed on love offerings, no percentage or expected amount. The amount and the percentage of ones net income that is available or that is sacrificed for this purpose is entirely up to the individuals who are making it. In the case of the Widow who put in the mite, as recorded in the Gospels, hers was a love offering and a substantial sacrifice at that—she put in all that she had. For the Widow, at that time and moment, she gave 100%. The Lord did not say that she was supposed to do that, nor did he say what her reward would be for doing it. He just made it clear that she had given more than all those who had contributed out of their abundance, whereas she contributed all cash resources, even though smaller by comparison of the dollar amount.

The Lord attributed noteworthy value to the Widow's offering because of the humble state of her economic affairs. She could not hope to be counted among the great givers of her church culture, her commitment to do what she did was private, between her and her Lord. Without our Lord's ability to know her heart and the heart of the wealthy, we would never have been made aware of this occasion. Christ brought attention to the comparative value between her offering and the offering of the wealthy, to illustrate to His apostles how the hypocrites made a mockery of their giving, doing what they did more for the glory and prestige than from sincere spiritual motivations.

There are two very important points to understand about this occasion and the Widow's sacrifice. The first is that no one can "budget" for sacrificial giving or any giving that is motivated by a spiritual motivation other than fulfilling a direct command. The second is that when one is motivated to make an offering, other than that which has been commanded, it doesn't have to be a large dollar amount for it to be significant. Studies have shown that the average monthly mission donation is in the \$15 - \$20 dollar range. Certainly the Lord has those who can and do cheerfully give much more, but these studies show that the bulk of today's mission giving is small monthly amounts.

## ***God's Redeemed Need Only Hearts For Missions***

During our twelve years of life as full-time missionaries in Mexico we had opportunity to make mission presentations to hundreds of congregations in seventeen states. A few of those congregations are very mission oriented and exposed their members to as many mission opportunities as possible on a regular basis. In every case it was made very clear that the congregation had no "mission's budget" per se. These very mission oriented congregations, never could know just how much their members were going to give to missions, in any one year until after the year was over. Their leaders were sensitive to the impossibility of budgeting love offerings for missions. However, most of the hundreds of other congregations in which we made mission presentations, always told us that they did not have any money in their budget to take on a new mission project. Our response was always that we did not expect them to have any mission money in their budget, but if they would allow us to make a presentation and expose their members to the opportunity, we would trust the Lord to provide the money.

In all our years of experience making mission presentations, we never had a congregation tell us that we were the answer to their prayers because they had a large mission budget, but had not had any specific opportunities presented to them for actual mission work. Thus, it is easy to see, that when congregational leaders make missions a regular budget item, they are greatly reducing the opportunity for the Spirit to lead their members into positive personal action. Believers need encouragement to develop their hearts for missions. When Paul approached the Corinthians he wasn't looking for a budget item for the poor saints in Jerusalem but for open hearts to be moved into action!

***Paul's message to the  
Corinthian congregation sets the  
proper attitude for missions***

2 Cor. 9: 8-9: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. And it is written: Psalms 112: 9

"He has dispersed abroad,  
He has given to the poor;  
His righteousness endures forever."

Paul is clearly telling the Corinthians that not only will they be blessed by God to have sufficient means, to do every good work, but that they, and all of God's redeemed, are the hands and feet that He uses to disperse abroad, to give to the poor and to provide the imaging of His enduring righteousness forever.

What the congregations of God's redeemed need, is not a budget for missions, but rather HEARTS for missions and faith that takes action on the promises of God, and trust Him to supply them with all that they need to fulfill His work.

Budgets are important for regular offerings in the Lord's congregations but in the matter of missions His word is clear: the giver is free to give as the Spirit moves on their heart to do so. The individual who has a heart for missions can always find an outlet: prayer is always of vital importance! Through the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous, the Lord brings blessings to those who are chosen to give the money or to do the work, for He is faithful to provide all that is needed. Even our prayers are the fruit of His Spirit. \*\*

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Check our website: [www.reformationinaction.com](http://www.reformationinaction.com). Individuals and small groups are welcome to travel with us to Mexico and see first hand the needs, meet the people and realize the opportunities we have for discipling the nations for Christ.

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**Mission Presentations**

**Contact**

**Zester Hatfield**

**Reformation Ministries  
International Corporation**

**R  
M  
I  
C**

**8900 Viscount Blvd. Ste. 725  
El Paso, Texas 79925  
&  
421 Ridge Pike  
Lafayette Hill, PA 19444**

**Phones: 610-809-2336 & 915-588-9742**

**Email: [zesterhatfield@reformationinaction.com](mailto:zesterhatfield@reformationinaction.com)**

**Website: [www.reformationinaction.com](http://www.reformationinaction.com)**

***Why***

***Missions***

***Are Not***

***A***

***Congregational***

***Budget Item***