

The Grace of Giving

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I felt pretty good about this past Sunday. It was dedicated to teaching about the Assemblies of God World Missions and Home Missions programs. I had a little apprehension about people coming to church to hear the Word of the Lord and I'm telling them about missions for the entire service, but I think it helps them see my heart. I believe in missions. Not only is it my heart, but I believe it is close to the heart of God as well.

I worked hard to gather statistics from each of our divisions of foreign missions and put them concisely on slides to present. I had to move fast because I ended up with over 40 slides in the presentation. I then moved to the actual names, and places they serve, of each of our Indiana District missionaries—24 in all. I moved on to home missions, like Chi Alpha, and shared each name and ministry. After that I brought it home with each of the missionaries Calvary supports on a monthly basis. We support 22 missionaries, a local ministry in Richmond, BGMC, Indiana Advance, our annual Fellowship Partners offering, and other special offerings for needs as they arise.

One such special offering, which we received Sunday, was for Stuart and Wendy Brown, missionaries to Mexico. They have been itinerating for almost two years trying to raise their monthly support to return to Mexico. They recently got what they needed, but had expended their cash reserves and were asking for help in replenishing their account. We pledged a \$500.00 one-time offering to help. This past Sunday the offering we received was \$487.56. The River also gave \$100.00 towards this need, making our total offering to the Browns \$587.56. This warms a pastor's heart when people respond to missions like this.

I have called on Calvary to give big on several occasions over the past few years. Each time they have responded with a sacrifice that amazes me. Generosity and commitment flow through our members when it comes to giving. For the size of our congregation each person gives an average of over \$1,500.00 per year to our work. Of course, some give more and some less. Nationally people give \$20.00 per person per week to the church. Calvary's average is \$28.00. We are exceptionally committed to giving.

Finally, it's one thing when a church gives big to get what they want or need, and we have great needs at Calvary. However, it reveals another kind of heart when a church gives big to supply the need of others. This is one pastor who is not ashamed to invite missionaries and guest speakers to share with our congregation, because I know Calvary will bless them by giving. I ought to know, because Susan and I are also direct recipients of Calvary's generosity each and every week. Along with their giving to others, they continually bless us with financial support, gifts, and acts of kindness.

Calvary is a blessing to me for all these reasons and more and I am very proud of them. They respond to the needs I present to them in a great way and God is blessing them in return.

*"But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge,
in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving."*

2nd Corinthians 8:7, NIV.

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