THREE INCHES, FIVE GALLONS, AND MORE THAN ENOUGH

Many years ago I was one of those pitiful creatures who thought that if I put $3 in the offering plate each Sabbath, I had done my duty. After all, if every member gave as much as I, the church would have a tidy sum to manage. It never occurred to me that I was partly responsible for creating the church operating deficit, which was reported each month by the church treasurer. Apparently everyone was not contributing as much as I.

Our church held a stewardship emphasis weekend, conducted by the conference stewardship director. When my turn came for my personal interview with him, I was horrified and incredulous when he described a formula that showed I should be contributing $45 per month for church operating (this was many years ago, and it did not include my tithe, which I faithfully returned). That amount was nearly four times as much as I was presently doing. I dint see how such a thing could be possible, but he convinced me to trust God and make Him partner as I stepped out in faith.

Now I had a place for that $45, and it was not for church expense. It was wintertime in southwestern Ohio. Our heating oil tank was almost empty, and I needed that $45 to buy more oil to keep my little family warm and snug from the blustery weather.

However, from that Friday’s paycheck I deducted $45 to place in my offering envelope for Sabbath morning. My wife and I decided we would trust God at least a little. If he didn’t come through for us before the oil tank ran dry, we could always go to my parents home for the weekend to keep warm.

That Friday evening we opened the Sabbath in worship, and then I used the dipstick to check the oil tank just outside the kitchen door. The level read three inches- or about 5 gallons for that size tank. I hope it would get us through unti the morning. The old furnace rumbled and blew all night.

It was very cold outside, and on Sabbath morning I noticed that the outside of the windows on our house were covered with ice. Just before leaving for Sabbath school, I checked the oil tank again. It showed three inches- or about five gallons!

“This is strange business,” I said to myself. “We sure are lucky.” Isn’t it amazing how long it sometimes takes us to recognize God’s working?

I was nervous all through church that day, especially when I put my envelope in the offering plate. We rushed home, gathered our food, and prepared to hurry to my parents’ home for warmth and shelter. The house was still warm as we loaded up the car., so I decided to check the tank one last time to get some ideas of when it would finally run out. It showed three inches--or about 5 gallons.

**For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord.**

**1 Kings 17:16, NIV**