

How Should the Church Raise Its Money?

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – The importance of believers supporting the local church through tithes and offerings
2. aim – To cause us to sacrificially give to the work of the local church, in order to advance its mission
3. passage – 1 Corinthians 9:13-14

b. outline

1. The Importance of Support in the Local Church
2. The Means of Support in the Local Church
3. The Center of Support in the Local Church

c. opening

1. and now, on to a subject that gets people *squirming* in their seats ...

I. The Importance of Support in the Local Church

Content

a. the *relationship* of money to the *believer*

1. in some branches of “Christendom”, money is the *primary concern* of the church (e.g. in Pentecostal circles, money is the focus of much of the preaching/teaching, and the “wealth” of the congregation *in relation to “faith”* is all-consuming)
2. in many other churches, money is rarely discussed, as though it is a *verboten* (i.e. off-limits) topic (i.e. except for the occasional sermon on the importance of “tithing”, discussions of money, *especially pastoral compensation*, are off-limits to the average person)
3. yet, money was a significant subject in the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, in the early church, and even in the didactic material in the NT
 - a. Jesus taught *directly* about money itself (**Matt. 6:24**, “*you cannot serve God and money*”)
 - b. Jesus used money in *parables* as examples (**Matt. 25:18**, “*and hid his master’s money*”)
 - c. Jesus saw money as symbolic in life (**Mark 12:41**, “*people putting money into the offering box*”)
 - d. Paul writes *whole chapters* on the use of money, *particularly in the church* (**see below**)
4. **IOW**: the NT has much to say about the use of money, the connection of money to our *spiritual* lives, and how *believers* are to *manage money* in life, particularly in their *relationship to God* ...

2. the *importance* of money to the *church*

1. because we live in a *material world* (as physical beings), and are subject to the *economic* realities all around us, the church will *necessarily* be connected to the use of money
 - a. even though there have been *some* who have attempted to “navigate” the church without the involvement of money (i.e. those who insist on a “pure” church, unadulterated by the things of this world) – a *minority* position that cannot actually withstand “reality”
 - b. e.g. to support a church *building* or meeting place, to *compensate* those who labor to preach, to expand the *ministries* of the church beyond its own people (i.e. in missions), and for the *benevolence* of those in need (i.e. the poor or those experiencing hardships)
2. and, although the discussion in the NT of raising and using money *in the church* is *rare*, there are specific passages that point us to how *the church* should raise *and use* money in this world ...

II. The Means of Support in the Local Church

Content

a. the *tithe*

1. **tithe** = a predetermined portion of what one possesses (a tenth) set aside as a contribution to a religious organization; a 10% offering to the church established as *a regular form of contribution*
 - a. the Hebrew word (*masar*), first used in **Gen. 14:20** (Abraham to Melchizedek), lit. = a tenth; 10% of the proceeds or value of what one possesses, given in honor to God as an act of *gratitude*
 - b. in the Mosaic Law, first mentioned in **Lev. 27:30**, establishes that a tenth of every crop was “*the Lord’s ... holy to the Lord*” (i.e. his *legitimate claim* as the One who had given the increase)

- c. and, the tithe was allocated by Yahweh to be used for the support of those who provided *spiritual help* to the people, the Levites (**Num. 18:21**), who were given no land inheritance of their own
 - d. thus, in Israel, the tithe was considered to be a *compulsory offering* of the people, a part of their *worship of God* and a support of their *spiritual leaders*
2. **note:** there is considerable debate over whether the OT tithe is still a legitimate form of monetary offering in the NT church – **i.e.** does the tithe remain as a *compulsory form of offering for Christians*?
- a. **i.e.** those who suggest that the tithe was a part of the *ceremonial code* of the Mosaic Law, thus superseded in the *new covenant* by the *freewill offerings* of those who had been *supernaturally born again*, thus possessing a heart *from God* filled with *his* generosity
 - b. **e.g.** Jesus' condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees for tithing *spices* (**i.e.** trivial matters), yet neglecting the "*weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faithfulness*" (**Matt. 23:23**)
 - 1. *condemning* their "compulsion" because they did not understand *grace*
 - c. **e.g.** Paul's teaching in regards to the "famine gift" that he was bringing to the Jerusalem saints, about giving "*not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*" (**2 Cor. 9:7**)
 - 1. that giving should *flow naturally* out of the life of a person who truly understands *grace*
 - d. **LOW:** the belief that the NT actually teaches a *significantly higher form of generosity*, not built on "compulsion", but built on the *natural generosity* that flows out of the born-again believer *in response to grace* (**i.e.** "*to whom much was given, of him much will be required*"; **Luke 12:48**)
3. **however:** there is *substantial* reason to believe that the tithe is *still* a legitimate requirement by God
- a. **e.g.** the tithe actually *precedes* the Mosaic Law – the Law of Moses is *not its genesis*
 - 1. there are *hints* of such a requirement even in **Genesis 4**, with the offerings of Cain and Abel
 - 2. Abraham offers a tithe to *Melchizedek*, a priest, in worship of God, in **Genesis 14:20**
 - a. **Hebrews 7** connects this tithe *to Jesus*, as the *greater high priest* (**i.e.** not from the Levitical line, but the line of Melchizedek, *preceding* the Aaronic line)
 - b. **e.g.** while *certain* aspects of the ceremonial code are done away with in Christ (**i.e.** since *the temple* no longer exists), many *other* aspects of *worship* still carry on
 - 1. true, we no longer sacrifice animals for atonement, but the *symbolism* of such sacrifices is seen in the death of Christ, and we speak of such a sacrifice as *the foundation of worship*
 - 2. the Sabbath continues, tracing its lineage back to the Seventh Creation Day (**Genesis 2:1-3**)
 - 3. neither Jesus *nor the NT Apostles* ever *repudiate* the tithe, *per se*, rather they *elevate it*
 - 4. and, Paul *equates* contributing in the church *to the OT support of the Levites* (**1 Cor. 9:13**)
4. so, the NT teaching on giving seems to *elevate the tithe* to a higher form of worship
- a. still *assuming* believers will participate **regularly** in the support of the church (as in the temple), but will do so **with an entirely different perspective of what monetary giving is all about**
 - b. thus, the *regular giving of a tithe* by believers can still be considered a *valid means* by which the church is supported monetarily
 - c. but, with a different **focus** – rather than being a "ritualistic obligation" in obedience to a "command" (or seeking a blessing), the tithe (for a NT believer) is a recognition that *by God's grace in Christ* everything belongs to Him, and we are simply returning to him *what is rightfully his*, within the framework of worship *in general* (**i.e.** as those he has sought out to worship him; **John 4:23**)
- b. the freewill offering**
- 1. the *freewill offering* is that sense of *generosity* flowing out of the heart of the regenerate man in which he gives *out of his own abundance* towards the needs of others *through the church*
 - a. **i.e.** monies given *above* the "expected" as an act of grace and mercy towards others – the *overflow* of thankfulness that translates into monies given *just because we are "led" to do so*
 - b. **i.e.** often given towards *specific* needs that may arise in the body (**e.g.** supporting widows or orphans, helping with disasters or hardships, a building project, sending for education, or just an [unexpected] act of kindness towards another brother or sister who may be hurting)
 - 2. it is *clearly* pictured in the NT – Paul had purposed, at the end of his Third Missionary Journey, to take up a collection for the saints in Jerusalem, suffering under a famine (**Rom. 15:25ff; 2 Cor. 8-9**)
 - a. and, he urged his fellow believers in Corinth to *join him* in this generosity (**1 Cor. 16:1-2**)
 - b. thus, it is clear *biblically* that such generosity is *also* a part of how the church is to be funded
- c. the charging of services**
- 1. in *some* cases, the church is also supported through specific types of *fund-raising*, as related to the providing of services *to the members of the church or those who benefit from its members*
 - a. **e.g.** charging for attending a function that requires "excess" support, selling books, renting or providing space on the property at a cost, participating in operations that help others
 - b. **i.e.** connecting a *legitimate price* to something that the church possesses, and passing that as a cost onto others that (in turn) aids the church in her mission

How Should the Church Raise Its Money?

2. **note:** it would be *illogical* to expect those *unconnected* with the church (**i.e.** the reprobate) to give to the church *without any legitimate return* on their “investment” (**e.g.** community fund-raising)
 - a. **i.e.** since the reprobate *hate* the God of the church, it would *illogical* for believers to look to them for help in *worshipping* God or advancing *his* mission in the world
 - b. the church should consider that the *vast majority* of its support comes *only from its own members*, or those *genuinely* connected by way of a similar vision (other churches or believers)

III. The Center of Support in the Local Church

Content

“... it is incumbent on the churches to whom [pastors] minister, not only to give them all due respect, but also to communicate to them of all their good things according to their ability, so as they may have a comfortable supply, without being themselves entangled in secular affairs; and may also be capable of exercising hospitality toward others; and this is required by the law of nature and by the express order of our Lord Jesus, who hath ordained they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” (1689 26:10b)

a. the command to ministerial compensation

1. **thesis: believers are commanded to fully compensate the elders who preach, and they should desire to do so with great generosity, because it assures that they will benefit from it**
 - a. although the *common* sentiment is: “God, you keep him humble, we’ll keep him poor”
2. a *limited* exegesis of **1 Corinthians 9:1-14** – highlighting the *key points* re: compensation
 - a. **vv. 1-2** – Paul’s *authority* over the church (as an apostle) was being questioned
 1. specifically, he was not *acting* as other leaders in the church had been acting (in taking money)
 - c. **vv. 3-6** – Paul *admits* that he made certain decisions (which was his right to do)
 1. one of which was to *not* accept any compensation, although he *had a right to it*
 - d. **vv. 7-12a** – Paul lays out his *first* biblical argument for his *right to compensation*
 1. quoting from **Deut. 25:4** – that the ox has a right to some of the grain he treads out
 2. **i.e.** this “reality” of ministerial compensation is part of the *moral law* – the “law of nature”
 - e. **vv. 12b-13** – Paul lays out his *second* biblical argument for his *right to compensation*
 1. that God had established a *precedent* in the compensation of the Levitical priests in the O.T.
 2. **i.e.** this “reality” of ministerial compensation is a part of the *worship code* (**above**)
 3. **note:** Paul *explains* here why *he* did not take of this right: he did not want to put any “stumbling block” in the way of church *getting started* (**note:** this “exception” no longer applies)
 - f. **v. 14** – Paul states the command *outright* – the church is *commanded* to *fully* compensate those who preach the Word – those who *preach* should “*live of the gospel*” (**i.e.** as the “*express order of our Lord Jesus*” through Paul *in this inspired writing*)
3. a *quick* examination of the Confession tells us **why** pastors are to be compensated *generously* ...
 - a. so preachers may live “comfortably” (not *extravagantly*, but with a “comfortable supply”; no worry)
 - b. so preachers may not be “entangled in secular affairs” (not having to hold down a “second” job)
 - c. so preachers may be hospitable towards others (allowed to be generous *themselves*)
 - d. so that the members of the church are in *obedience* to what God has *commanded* ...

b. the intention of ministerial compensation

1. the average church member should be so **jealous** about the preaching of the Word over him that he does not allow *anything* to get in the way of the pastor having the time to study and pray
 - a. **i.e.** he says, “preacher, we will pay your bills ... you study and bring God’s Word to us ...”
 1. **IOW:** “that **½ of 1%** is **so important to us**, we want to *make sure* it’s properly prepared ...”
 - b. **i.e.** and the elders and deacons should say, “preacher, we will keep *everything else off of you* ... you study and bring God’s Word to our people ...”
 1. **IOW:** “instead of making *you* do everything, we’ll divvy up everything amongst ourselves, and you stay fixed on teaching and preaching ...”
2. the average church member should see ministerial compensation from the perspective of **sola gratia**
 - a. having *received* something by the grace of God (**i.e.** redemption in Christ) should be *mirrored* in *giving* something through the grace of God ...