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MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Giving

Importance and necessity of giving:

Consistent and regular giving is important to the smooth operation of a church. Without this, it is difficult to plan (cf. Pro. 21:5) to make sure that bills will be paid (cf. Rom. 13:8) and commitments met (cf. Mat. 5:37). Even though many times believers need to hear messages preached on this topic, pastors may choose not to do so because they do not like to talk about money. Yet, the giving of one's resources is important to the faith of a believer as it is a manifestation of his faith (cf. Jam. 2:14-26). Therefore, if a person claims to be a Christian but does not give, then there is the possibility that he is not a true believer in Christ (2 Cor. 9:13; Jam. 2:14-26). Christians, who are children of God and followers of Christ, should be generous givers (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 9:6,8-9; Pro. 22:9; 1 Tim. 6:17-18), even sacrificial givers (cf. Luke 21:1-4; 2 Cor. 8:1-5), reflecting the character of their Father (John 3:16; Rom. 8:31-32; 2 Cor. 9:15) and Savior (Mark 10:45; Rom. 8:32). Therefore, a Christian who gives expresses his faith through his act of giving (2 Cor. 9:13). The pastor, however, who does not teach on the biblical principles of giving is not helping those under his care grow and mature in that area of their faith. This is tragic.



It is important that church members give to their church for the purpose of supporting its ministries. Their giving will pay for such things as: the pastor's salary (1 Cor. 9:1-14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18), evangelism and the sending out of cross-cultural missionaries (cf. Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 13:1-3; Php. 4:15-16), the support of widows (1 Tim. 5:5,7,9-10), helping people in need (Acts 2:44; 4:32-35; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:13-15; Gal. 2:10; 6:9-10; Heb. 13:16; cf. Deut. 15:7-11; Mat. 5:42), building up-keep, utility bills, etc. Without the faithful giving of its members, the church and its ministries would not be able to function. It is important to note that the financial support of the church is to come from believers. Money should never be solicited by the church from unbelievers for this reason (2 Cor. 6:14-15; cf. 3 John 5-8).

From the money collected each week, it is important that the church pay the pastor a salary. The Apostle Paul made this point very clear in 1 Corinthians 9:1-14. In this passage, Paul made three points: 1) he had the right to be paid a salary as a minister of the gospel (vss. 3-7); 2) the laborer has the right to share in the fruits of his labor (vss. 8-10); and 3) those who proclaim the gospel have the right to make their living from the gospel (vss. 11-14). This passage is as true today as it was dur-

ing the time of the Apostle Paul. Any church that does not pay its pastor a salary is negligent.

The pastor's salary:

How much money should a church pay its pastor? The general rule for many churches is that the pastor's salary should be equal to the average salary earned by the people of his church. Other churches may look at what the average salary is for a professional who has the same amount of education and similar responsibilities, and pay their pastor accordingly. Whereas both of these methods have merit, the church needs to remember that the job of the pastor is not a regular job. It is a spiritual job where he is in battle with the evil one on almost a daily basis. Also, his job is not from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. He generally is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and he is always expected to be there for the people of the church when they are in need. The pastor has to deal with issues behind the scenes that often the people of the church are unaware of. At times the pastor has to deal with situations that are very difficult, sensitive, complicated, and sometimes even bizarre. In his job, he may hear things that he doesn't want to have to hear and deal with situations he would rather not have to deal with. But because he is the pastor, many of these things fall upon him. This is why it is important for the pastor to have godly, qualified elders working alongside him in the ministry; to be there to help him in these difficult times. Therefore when deciding upon a salary, the church needs to take these things into consideration and make sure that whatever salary they pay their pastor, it is sufficient to meet his needs. The pastor should not have to find himself in situations where he has to send his family to bed hungry, cannot purchase needed clothing, cannot pay his monthly bills or afford necessary doctor visits, cannot save for the future, or be able to take his family on a yearly vacation. A pastor's family who lives a meager existence may be negatively affected, especially the children. Due to such a life, they may never want to be involved in full-time ministry, but instead may want to seek riches due to the difficulty of their childhood. According to the Apostle Paul: "The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says: 'YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (1 Tim. 5:17-18). The pastor therefore needs to receive an adequate salary.

Are the poor able to give?

What if the people of the church are too poor to give? Giving is not related to how much a person earns or has. Giving is an issue of the heart. One day when Jesus was with His disciples, He brought to their attention the generous act of a poor widow who most likely went unnoticed by everyone else. This event is recorded in Luke 21:1-4: "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all *of them*; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.'" How is it that this poor widow could put into the offering the last two copper coins which she had to live on? Because she was giving from her heart to God, not from her surplus, and was trusting God to take care of her needs.

This point is made even clearer when looking at the example of the Macedonians. When Paul had written to the Corinthians about the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3), Paul mentioned the generosity of the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-5). In 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, Paul stated that the Macedonian believers were experiencing affliction and deep poverty at the time of the offering for those in Jerusalem (vs. 2). Yet Paul said that it was the result of their abundant joy and deep poverty which resulted in them giving liberally (vs. 2). Paul said: "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" (vss. 3-4). Therefore out of their deep poverty they begged for the opportunity to give, which they did up and beyond their ability. As Paul testified, "and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (vs. 5). They were able to give up and beyond even what Paul had thought possible because they had given themselves wholeheartedly to God, to Paul and those assisting him. Therefore through the grace of God (vs. 1) and according to their desire (vss. 3-4), the poor gave to the needs of the poor. As a believer matures in his faith, drawing closer to God, he too will become more generous toward the needs of his church and others.

Encourage giving:

The pastor needs to encourage the people of his church to give. In the Old Testament, a tithe was required by God of a man's total produce (Deut. 14:22); grain, new wine and oil (Deut. 14:23). The tithe was holy to the Lord (Lev. 27:30), and it was to be used to supply the needs of the Levites "in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting" (Num. 18:21). Those who did not give of their tithe, God said were robbing Him and were cursed for doing so (Mal. 3:8-9). Yet He told them to test Him: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*,' says the LORD of hosts. 'All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:10-12). Those in the nation of Israel who trusted God with their tithe were blessed by Him, the same principle which is repeated in the New Testament.

Tithing:

Although in the Old Testament a tithe was required of the people of Israel, in the New Testament there is not a specified amount believers are required to give to their church. Instead, when Paul was taking up the offering for the poor in Jerusalem, he told the Corinthians: "On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). They were instructed to lay aside money for the offering in direct proportion to how they had prospered. So on Sunday (Saturday being the seventh day) believers were to consider how God had prospered them during the past week; and then in proportion to that, set money aside for the offering. Also, in 2 Corinthians 9, Paul further told the Corinthians: "Now this *I* say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one *must do* just

as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). The point here is that a person will be blessed in proportion to how he gives. If he gives sparingly, he will reap sparingly. If he is generous in his giving, then God will be generous to him. God does not want people giving "grudgingly" (when they do not want to) "or under compulsion" (when they feel they have to). God desires that the giver be a "cheerful giver," giving joyfully. As a person gives cheerfully and generously, God will continue to supply more, multiplying what He gives him even before he uses it, resulting in the maximum distribution and impact of the believer's resources (2 Cor. 9:10).

New Testament giving:

How much money should a Christian give to his church? The author's personal conviction is that since the people of Israel gave a tithe -- ten percent -- of their gross income, so the Christian should begin here. It seems that a tithe was a standard in Old Testament times because even before the Law of Moses was given, Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek, the King of Salem who "was a priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 7:6-10). Beginning with a tithe, a person should continue to give up and beyond that as God prospers him (cf. 1 Cor. 16:2). When a person gives, he should always give to God first, for in so doing he honors God (Pro. 3:9-10). When God comes first, then the believer's other needs will be met (cf. Php. 4:15-19). Therefore, giving is an act of faith. When believers live this way, specifically when one gives to God first before purchasing food, paying bills etc., he is walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the reason why giving is such a test and evidence of one's faith; for the person who gives to God first is placing his trust in Him, not in his money and possessions. As Jesus said: "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth" (Luke 16:13).

The pastor/elders are the ones who need to set the example of giving in the church (1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Pet. 5:3). They are not to boast about how much they give (Mat. 6:1-4), but their example should be one of generosity; having a hope fixed on God, free from the love of money (1 Tim. 3:3; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Their example, along with the exhortations from the Word of God, should motivate people to give, not because they feel coerced by their leaders to do so (2 Cor. 9:7). The giving of a person's resources is to be an offering which is given freely to God by him (Php. 4:18; Heb. 13:16), acknowledging that God is the source of all that he has in the first place (cf. Php. 4:19; Jam. 1:17). Below I have provided some biblical financial principles. Though some go beyond the topic of giving which this chapter addresses, I have added them for your consideration.

1. **Believers are to be good stewards (All that we own comes from and belongs to God):**
 - God is the source of our wealth - James 1:17
 - All that God gives us we will have to account for one day - Mat. 25:14,19
 - God will bless the faithful steward - Luke 16:10-13
2. **Money is not to be our master; God is:**
 - Do not pursue wealth - Prov. 23:4-5
 - Do not store up treasures on earth - Mat. 6:19

- Store up treasures in heaven - Mat. 6:20
 - Where one's treasure is his heart will be - Mat. 6:21
 - No one can serve both God and wealth - Mat. 6:24
3. **Be content:**
 - Asking God to meet your needs - Prov. 30:7-9
 - Because God will meet your needs - Mat. 6:25-33; Php. 4:19
 - With your wages - Luke 13:14
 - In whatever circumstance you are in - Php. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-11
 - Because God is with you - Heb. 13:5
 4. **Be generous:**
 - Sacrificial giving begins with giving yourself to God first - 2 Cor. 8:1-5; cf. Luke 21:1-4
 - Give in accordance to how God has blessed you - 1 Cor. 16:2
 - Because this is righteous behavior - Psa. 37:21
 - God will provide for your future needs - 1 Tim. 6:18-19
 - In proportion to your giving God will give back to you - 2 Cor. 9:6-7
 - God will abundantly meet your needs and multiply your seed and harvest - 2 Cor. 9:8-12
 - It confirms your faith - 2 Cor. 9:13-15
 5. **Give discreetly so that God will reward you** - Mat. 6:1-4
 6. **Don't forget God in times of financial blessings** - Deut. 6:10-12
 7. **Be thankful to God and rejoice in everything** - Deut. 8:10, Php. 4:4; 1 Thes. 5:16-18
 8. **Plan, prepare and save for the future:**
 - Do not consume all that you have; save for future needs - Prov. 21:20
 - It is wise to discern and plan for what lies ahead in the future - Deut. 32:28-29; Prov. 6:6-11
 - What you have today will not last forever - Prov. 27:23-24
 - You will have what is needed when necessary - Luke 14:28-33
 - Understand as you plan that God is the One who is in control of your future - Jam. 4:13-15
 9. **Do not become security for another man's loan:**
 - If you have done this deliver yourself quickly - Prov. 6:1-5
 - By doing this you may lose everything you have - Prov. 22:26-27
 - To do so shows a lack of wisdom -- Prov. 17:18
 10. **Be careful about borrowing:**
 - You may become a slave to your debt (to the creditor) - cf. Prov. 22:7
 - You may lose much or all that you have - cf. Mat. 18:23-25
 11. **Pay those whom you owe:**
 - The government, creditors, etc. - Rom. 13:7-8
 - Those who work for you - Deut. 24:14-15; cf. Jam. 5:4

For more information on giving, please see the article titled, "The Spiritual Disciplines."



APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Have messages been preached in your church on the topic of giving?
2. If messages were preached, what was the response of the people to the messages?
3. If the response was not good, why do you think that the people responded the way in which they did?
4. When speaking on the topic of giving, does your church take a strong stand that people are required to tithe, or do they teach that people are to be cheerful givers who are not to give grudgingly or under compulsion? What difference could this make in the attitude of the givers?
5. Are you as a church leader setting the example of giving cheerfully and generously? What about the other leaders in your church?
6. Does your church pay its pastor a salary? If so, is it sufficient for him and his family to live on?
7. How much money would your church need to collect each month to support its pastor, pay its utility bills, and support its ministries?

Pastor's salary: _____

Utilities: _____

Church ministries: _____

TOTAL: _____

8. If everyone in your church tithed, would they be able to collect each month the total amount of money you listed in question number 7?
9. Now compose a plan of things which your leaders can do to help the members of your church understand that the words of Jesus are true: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

10. If you were to preach a series of messages on the topic of giving, what passages would you use? What would be the main idea that you would emphasize in each passage? Please list the passage and its main idea next to it.

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11. Is there a project that the members of your church could work on together to promote giving and the blessings that accompany this act? What ideas do you have for possible projects? What might be some ways which you could give evidence to the accompanied blessings of the givers?

Projects:

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Ways to evidence blessings:

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12. What do you think about asking unbelievers for money to support your church? Please answer this question with Scripture references.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. How will you encourage new believers, who are not used to giving generously to a church, to give generously to your church without making them think that you just want their money?
2. How will you determine when you should start drawing a salary from your church? How will you determine how much you should receive? Since this may not be a normal practice in your country, how will you help your new church to understand that this is a biblical principle?
3. At what point in your church's development will you introduce the idea of supporting missionaries? At what point will you actually begin supporting them?
4. What safeguards will you put in place from the beginning so that your church's finances will not be mishandled? How will you make sure that you are never in a situation where you could be accused of mishandling money?