

Should We Pay Pastors?

Introduction:

- ❖ One question I have received several times in the past couple years is “should we pay our pastors?” This question is often brought up in relation to the fact that in scripture we do not see a singular authoritative pastor in a hierarchical structure over a local church. However, we do see a plurality of equally authoritative Elder/Bishops that lead the local assembly. Some people acknowledge this but naturally ask, “do we need to pay all of them?”, “what if we are a small church that has a limited budget?”

This lesson is aimed at looking at some of the Biblical data in regards to paying our spiritual leaders within the local assembly and to gain a better understanding of our responsibilities in this area. We will be considering 1 Corinthians 9 as our main text and jumping off from there. Many of you may already have your mind made up on this issue but I hope to first muddy the water with some counter points, and then try to clear things up again.

The subject of money is often times a difficult and avoided topic in many churches Bob Russell, author of *When God Builds a Church: 10 Principles for Growing a Dynamic Church* had this to say,

“Wise stewardship of God’s resources is an important part of a healthy church. We live in a materialistic culture where people are battling daily the god of money. Biblical stewardship and generous giving can transform lives and significantly advance the Kingdom of God. Yet most preachers don’t even want to broach the subject of money.

Preachers I know hate to talk about money. A lot of us make sure there’s a note in the bulletin that says, “If you are a guest, please feel no obligation to participate in the offering. We want you to enjoy the service.” We don’t say, “If you’re our guest, don’t feel like you have to sing and don’t feel like the invitation is directed at you.” We don’t say, “This sermon is on sexual purity. If you’re a guest and that makes you feel uncomfortable, there are ear plugs available.” Why, then is money such a sensitive subject?” (pg 231-232)

Answer: Because we live in a culture steeped in greed. People don't want to give up their hard earned money without a fight. So what says the scriptures?

- ❖ 1 Corinthians 9:1-17 – The Central Idea of this text is that those who labor faithfully in the word ought to be supported by it. “they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”(14b)

Muddying the Water:

- ❖ Why Not pay Pastors?
 - Several reasons could be given in order to argue for not paying our leaders. We will consider 3 reasons someone might give for not paying Elders.
 1. Would paying just be promoting filthy lucre and covetousness? (1 Tim 3:3)
 - Filthy Lucre – Greedy of base gain, greedy of money
 - Covetous – loving money, greedy of filthy lucre

The charge is that one of the qualifications for Bishops is that they do not crave money or power ect., so would it be wise to just make it a non-paid position? Additionally, what if we don't have enough of a budget to do so?

2. The Ministry isn't a “job” or “Career” but is servitude. Ministry is about serving others not yourself. (Matt 20:20-28)
 - Christ came to serve not be served
 - There are abuses of the position (both ways)
 - So to avoid all this why not just have volunteers so we can use the budget for other things?
3. Paul's example
 - 1 Cor 9:18-19 – Paul had power to “charge” for his services in the gospel, but decided not to “abuse” it in order to gain more converts.
 - 2 Cor 11:5-12 – Paul did not take wages from the Church at Corinth.

- 1 Thess 2:9-12 – Paul and his company worked in order to not be chargeable to the church at Thessalonica.
- 2 Thess 3:7-15 (Acts 18:3) – we worked for our room and board as an example.
- Did Paul choose to sometimes abstain from collecting a salary from the churches? The thought therefore is that if Paul set the example then we should follow it.
- However Paul, at other times accepted payment. (2 Cor 11:9) He accepted help from those from Macedonia.

Muzzle not the Ox:

❖ 1 Corinthians 9:1-17

- Vs 1-6 – Paul defends his apostleship to the Corinthians
 1. I've seen Jesus – Damascus road and further revelations (Acts 9)
 2. You are my work – (Acts 18)
 3. Some are examining me – 2 Cor 11:12 – “them which desire occasion”
 4. As an apostle I have certain privileges
- Vs 7-9 – Paul uses 4 different illustrations to show the silliness of not paying elders and to drive his point home
 1. A soldier who has to pay to fight.
 2. A vineyard owner who does not eat of his own vineyard
 3. A shepherd who does not eat of his own flocks and herds
 4. A strange law about muzzling oxen
 - 1 Tim 5:17-18, Deut 25:4 This is kind of an odd law. Basically, it allows for the ox to eat as he works. Of all the laws God could have given the Jews, this one is definitely a strange one.
- Vs 10-11 – Paul explains the law concerning the ox
 1. Vs 9 “doth God take care for oxen?” Does this law exist only because God loves cows so much that he wants them to be taken care of?

2. God cares about his labors and he made a provision for them (similar to O.T. priests)
3. He teaches us through object lessons
 - 1 Cor 10:6 “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”
 - 1 Cor 10:11 “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”
4. “Is it a great thing” is it overstepping, presumptuous or arrogant? (the ox doesn’t eat up all the corn. Bad leaders misuse their power - Ezk 34
5. Do we see spiritual things as more needful or the cares of this worlds? (Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. – 2 Tim 4:10)
- Vs 12-14 “Do we have this power?”
 1. Did Paul have the right to expect payment?
 2. Who ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of it?
 - Of = out of, from, or by
 3. Vs 13 gives an answer to the objection that maybe only “apostles” should be paid. Paul includes the apostles and his traveling company with all those that preach the gospel.
- Vs 15-17 – “I chose to avoid payment from you”
 1. Paul chose in this case to abstain for a purpose.

Conclusion:

- ❖ Ought we pay Pastors (Elders/Bishops) and those who labor in the doctrine and word? YES! Are we required to under Grace? NO! Can men ultimately choose to forgo pay to accomplish something? Yes, but that is their choice not the church’s.
 - 2 Cor 9:6-8 - Reaping and sowing principle applies here
 1. Do we value the work of the ministry enough to make it a priority? Giving is an issue of Christian maturity.

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Reaping and Sowing in the Dispensation of Grace

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2. You demonstrate what you truly value by what you invest into. (not money only)
3. All sufficiency in good works. Not a prosperity Gospel.
4. Fat coach, skinny coach