

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Give \$\$\$ To The Pastor?

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Fact or Fiction? *Should pastors be received as a “gift” or “treasure” to impart in you? Is it proper to be taught in a new members class that we should give gifts and money to the pastor and his wife and one should see their pastor as a personal gift coming to impart to you?*

Thanks for your questions. When we have questions, we can always rest assured that God’s word has our answers. This question has elements of some scriptural fact to it but even facts can be distorted at times. We must understand that many times our answers do not come through just a few isolated scriptures but they will come through the overall wisdom and counsel of God’s word as a whole. Teaching should be given in context with other scripture and line up with the Gospel of Christ. (*Galatians 2:14*) Also, we must rely on our personal relationship with God and His Spirit. God not only reveals truth to us but also helps us understand it as well. (*John 16:12-15, I Corinthians 2:9-16*)

First of all we want to say that it is not wrong to honor the ministry of Christ that labor among us for the sake of the Gospel with financial support, but it is wrong for anyone to put an overemphasis on the “man”, “gift” or “money” instead of on Christ and His Church. Also, it’s important that Ministers of the Gospel do not give others even the slightest indication or impression that they have any personal ownership rights or claims to the gifts of Christ because to do so would be wrong. These gifts were given to the ministry in order to serve others. Let us explain further.

The New Testament scriptures teach us that Jesus gave these ministry gifts unto men - the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. Know that these gifts are not the person per se as much as *what God has placed on the inside of them* to impart to others. These gifts are from the Person of Christ Himself that have been given or imparted unto men for the benefit of His Church. These spiritual gifts and/or divinely inspired messages from God are to bless, encourage and edify the saints and also to help equip them for works of service for God. The divine gifting given to the ministries are also to help the saints mature spiritually and to grow up and “attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (*Ephesians 4:7-16*) Since this is the case, we need to carefully examine an individual’s message and *what they’re trying to impart to us and find out whether it is truly from God before we receive it.*

Notice in verse 7 of the latter passage that these gifts are given by God’s grace. This is very important. Grace is something we don’t deserve or didn’t earn on our own but is a free gift from God. We cannot take ownership of something that was never ours in the first place. The divine gifts that God has given all of His people originated from Him, not us. He has given them to mankind to be used for His glory and according to His divine will or purposes. The apostle Paul put much emphasis on the fact that God called him by grace to be an apostle. Paul did not take credit for his divine gift and call but gave God all the credit and glory. (*I Corinthians 3:5-9*) What the Lord has given His disciples and ministers was given freely to them without charge and His desire is that they are to give these things to others freely as well. (*Matthew 10:8*) Know that God gives all things freely to us by His grace.

Financial support is given to the ministry to help provide for their earthly needs while they labor for the sake of the Gospel. In many cases, this can free them up from secular work so they may devote their time to serving God and His people. So, there is a practical side to supporting the ministry. It is wrong however; if ministers give the saints the impression that we are to give money in order to receive these divine gifts or blessings from God. As examples to the flock, ministers should avoid all appearance of evil. (*I Peter 5:1-4, I Thessalonians 5:22*) It is not true that we must first give to God before He will give

to us. Some ministers have used the phrase: "you must first give to God before He will release what He has in His hands to you." (*This has often been used when taking up offerings.*) This teaching is a fallacy, since God gives all things freely to us by His grace. (*Romans 8:31-32, Matthew 10:8*)

Also, many are teaching that we must do or observe works of the law before God can bless us financially (examples, tithing, first fruit offering and also offerings given according to Jewish feast days). This is proven to be *false teaching* because according to the New Covenant because we do not receive our inheritance blessings through doing works of the Law, but by having faith in Christ and because we are now joint-heirs with Him as sons of God. (*Romans 4:13-16, 8:14-17, Galatians 3:18*)

Regarding impartation- it is true that the ministry imparts spiritual knowledge and gifts from God to the Body of Christ. The apostle Paul spoke of this in *Romans 1:11-12*. He told the Romans that he longed to impart some spiritual gift to them. (NIV) His purpose? He wanted to make them strong in the Lord and if they would become spiritually strong, not only would they be edified, but Paul would as well, knowing that what he gave them was helping them to grow in the faith. So we find, here, that ministers can receive blessings other than monetary gifts, like having the reward of seeing the people of God prospering in the faith. They are not to look for monetary or material reward alone however. We must remember that when someone is imparting something that is *supposed* to be of a spiritual nature to us, it is the responsibility of believers to seek God in personal prayer and to study His word to find out if what that vessel is trying to impart to us is truly from God. (*Acts 17:11, II Timothy 2:15, I John 4:1*)

Not only do "pastors" have "treasure" from God, but also do you know that each and every saint does as well, including yourself? (*II Corinthians 4:7*) We all have the indwelling of the Spirit, but different gifting according to God's divine will and purposes. (*I Corinthians 12:11, 14, 27-30*) Some of the ordained ministries in the Body of Christ wrongly teach that only they are of the New Testament priesthood. Through the atonement of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a change in the law *and* the institution of a New Covenant however, all believers have now become priests of God. (*Hebrews 7:12, I Peter 2:4-10*)

Now that all believers are priests, they may also be the recipients of or benefit from the offerings taken up, unlike in the Old Testament, where only the Levitical priesthood was the recipients of the first tithe or offerings. This is why even from the beginning of the Church we find it recorded that offerings were *distributed among all the saints*. This was done so that no one in the body of Christ had lack. This is most importantly for the poor, widows and orphans. (*Acts 2:41-45, 4:32-36, I Corinthians 16:1-2- please not that this collection was being taken up for the people of God, II Corinthians 8 - this offering was being taken up for the saints at Jerusalem.*) *This truth has not been taught in Churches but it is truth nonetheless.*

The entire Church should realize that there is not to be a hierarchal system in the Church, elitism or favoritism among the body. God's word strongly opposes this. (*I Corinthians 3:1-11, James 1:1-13*) We must look to the character, nature and example of Christ as our role model when it comes to leadership, including pastors. Jesus came and humbled Himself in the form of a servant and came to serve man and not to be served. (*Luke 22:27, Mark 9:35*) *His focus was not on money but the Kingdom of God.* The type leadership that we should be supporting are those who exemplify Jesus and point others to Him *and not to themselves*. Jesus promised us that if we put God and His Kingdom first, all that we need would be added unto us. (*Matthew 6:33*)

Jesus sought His provision from the Father and it was provided, sometimes supernaturally and sometimes through people. We do not find it recorded that Jesus took up monetary offerings for Himself or other visible means of support, but He certainly received financial support from others when they gave it. We find it recorded in one place that His itinerate ministry was supported financially by women disciples. (*Luke 8:1-3*)

Those in the ministry need to be careful and not put too much emphasis on their office, position, gifting or *person* but instead should be putting the emphasis on the Lord and His Kingdom. A servant is not greater than His Master. (*John 15:20*) Those in the ministry are servants of Christ and should not be exalting

themselves but Jesus. Everyone in the Church should steer clear of an attitude of revering or worshipping the pastor instead Jesus (*or any other leader for that matter*). We are merely vessels of the Lord to serve Him and to also bring glory and honor to Him. The apostles of the Lord set an example for us in this area and it has been recorded in scripture for our learning.

Often men place too much emphasis on other men. When Peter arrived at Cornelius' house and Cornelius fell at Peter's feet to worship him, Peter corrects his attitude by making him get up and said, "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." (*Acts 10:25-26*) Also, Paul rebuked the Corinthians for putting too much emphasis or reverence on himself and Apollos and then placed their attention back where it truly belonged-on Christ Himself. He made it perfectly clear that what he and Apollos had been given had come from God and God alone. (*I Corinthians 3:1-11*) We also learn from Paul that when the saints of God put too much emphasis on men rather than Christ, that it only proves that they are yet spiritually immature.

Unfortunately in the Church today the pastor has most often been elevated in importance and pre-eminence above all the other ministries *and also the saints of God*. This is not the will of God however. (*I Peter 5:1-4*) Although all ministries should be respected and can be financially supported, one must not be greedy for money or expect preferential treatment. We find that every part of the body is necessary, that we are all inter-dependent in Christ and that there are no "unimportant" parts. (*I Corinthians 12:12-31*)

As Paul teaches in *I Corinthians 13*, love should be the true hallmark of every Christian and especially among the ministry. Love is not selfish, but is more concerned with others. Everything we do should originate with love. It is fine to support the ministry but for the right reasons. When Paul taught the Church in the area of giving, he made it plain that the saints were to give by grace and that they were not to be commanded, coerced, forced, or manipulated into giving or giving what they did not have. All believers are to give according to their ability. (*I Corinthians chapters 8 & 9*) We need to make sure that we do not allow others to manipulate us or deceive us with false teaching in the area of giving or putting a financial burden on us so they might live a life of ease or wealth. (*II Corinthians 8:13-14*)

Unfortunately today when most offerings are taken up, they are taken up for the ministry or only for the upkeep of the "Church" building and the financial needs of the saints are neglected. It is not wrong to provide a physical building for the saints to meet in but more emphasis should be put on helping the saints to grow in grace and knowledge, be edified spiritually and trained and equipped for works of service than having a fancy building. What good is a fancy building if a brother or sister is destitute or lacking food, shelter or clothes? (*James 2:1-8, 14-18*) We must prove our faith by doing godly works that are rooted in love. Know that offerings are not just for the ministry but also for the benefit of the saints, especially those who are in need. Every Church should see to the needs of the entire congregation, not just to the needs of the pastor and his or her family. Again, it is not wrong to honor, respect or give to the pastor, but not at the expense of neglecting everyone else.

In closing, whenever saints are being taught to do something by the ministry, we must first know whether it is the Lord's will and balanced according to the scriptures before we receive and practice it. Here are some final words of wisdom:

1. Does their message line up with the scriptures? (*Acts 17:11, II Timothy 2:15*) More importantly, does it line up with the Law of Christ and the standards of the New Covenant? The Law of Christ is higher than the Law of Moses and this is what we are to follow and obey. (*Hebrews 3:1-6, 7:18*) Also beware of those who take scripture out of context or do not use the whole counsel of God as given in His Word.
2. What is the motive behind the message? The main motive or focus should not be on money but on Christ and His Kingdom. Beware of those who teach falsely for ill-gotten gain. (*Titus 1:9-11*)
3. Look for the overall fruit of the life or lives of the ministers doing the teaching. (*Jesus said you would know them by their fruit. Matthew 7:15-20*)
4. Are they good stewards over what God has entrusted to them? Do they make themselves accountable before God and man? (*II Corinthians 8:20-21*)

5. Are they laborers worthy of their hire? Are they serving Christ, men or themselves? (Luke 10:7, / Timothy 5:18) Remember, we each have a responsibility to be good stewards over what God has entrusted to us personally as well, including money and the reasons for giving it.

Lastly, remember that there are no super saints in the Kingdom of God. It's wrong to put some on a pedestal above others. God is no respecter of persons and we shouldn't be either. We should give honor and respect to everyone in the body of Christ and steer away from favoritism.

There are some prosperity preachers and teachers today that are not teaching in line with the truth of the Gospel. Some are using the commands of the Law of Moses to force others to give, using deception through false prophecy or false teachings that have been fabricated by man. Beware of those who put an overemphasis on you giving money (*especially to their ministry only*) and teach that you must give in order to get. Sad to say but many times the only ones who are "prospering" financially are those taking up the offering, not the hearers of their message. Some are "fleecing the sheep". They make promises to God's people by claiming to speak in the name of the Lord but not all are speaking the words of God.

Ministers of Christ are to be ministers of the Spirit - not of the devil (*who lies and deceives*), not of the letter of the Law (*which kills*), or of the flesh (*by being a law unto themselves*). We should only receive impartations (*including how to give*) that we are able to prove come from the Word and the Spirit. We pray that God will give you further insight into all these things.