

Should pastors live from the ministry?

There are people who propose that the office of pastor is not biblical. But the Bible declares that God constituted the office of pastor, and gave the gift of pastor to the church. (**Ephesians 4:8, 11-12** “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”.) His official office is “bishop”, and his activity is that of “pasturing.” The pastor’s requirements are that he be an elder, a man of God. In **1 Timothy 3:5**, Paul comments that the pastor (bishop) has to rule or govern well his own house, because if he can’t “how shall he take care of the church of God?” This idea coincides with the O.T. teaching on pastors, that he is a spiritual administrator.

Moreover in **Hebrews 13:17** we are commanded to obey “those who have the rule over us” and to submit to them. This is clearly the ministry of pastoral oversight, which cannot be disputed, and it is biblical. **Hebrews 13:17** Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

1 Corinthians 16:15-16 I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth.

God has laid down the principle that everybody should be striving to support themselves by their own labors. **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12** And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

¹ Paul commanded Titus in 1:5-7 to establish elders in each city and repeated almost exactly the list of 1 Timothy 3 for bishop. In Titus 1:7 he used the word “bishop” for these administrators. In 1 Timothy 3:2 Peter used the word “elders” that feed (pastor). Luke in Acts 20:28 uses the word “bishops” that pastor the church. The three speak of the same person, with the distinctions that “pastor” is the activity, “elder” is the character required, and “bishop” is the official ecclesiastical office.

Ephesians 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

1 Timothy 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

These verses demand that each person works hard, and that he lives from the fruit of his labors (hands). If he does not want to work, that he should not eat either. This rejection of hard work is equivalent of denying the Christian faith (the curse of God upon man in the garden **Gen. 3:17-19**). Then it is clear that the pastor ought to work, and live from what he does as work.

Those that work of the gospel should live of the gospel

Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 proposes his argument for a minister living from his ministry. For the peculiar problems in the Corinthian church, Paul had a special treatment in regard to them. For a time Paul received a “salary” from other churches (**2 Cor. 11:8** I robbed (take goods from somebody) other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.) and left the Corinthian church without any need to sustain him, and later Paul tried to rectify this situation. False teachers had entered this church, and they taught that the church owed nothing to Paul (the founder of this church, and the person who introduced them to the gospel, and taught them their doctrine). How they want Paul to get letters of approval from these false teachers **2 Cor. 3:1-2**.

1 Cor 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. Even so hath the Lord

ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. His argument is that God imposes a spiritual law, that he who works hard (in obedience to Genesis 3:17-19) should receive just recompense according to his labors, and in exchange for his labors. In the church, the ministers that preach and teach the whole church should live of this.

1 Timothy 5:17-18 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour², especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

In **1 Timothy 5:17**, Paul repeats this teaching tying it to the Moses’ principle with the worker and his just or “worthy” salary. The idea here is that there are people who are chosen to govern, rule, or administrate, and they make the “executive” decisions for the group. **Hebrews 13:7** and **13:17** mention this same concept of a person who is in charge (literally the Greek means “boss”). A study of the O.T. concept of ra’ah (to pastor or shepherd) reveals exactly this, somebody who cares for and makes decisions for a body of people or animals.

Gálatas 6:6-9 Let him that is taught in the word communicate³ unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Every Christian should look for a good church that teaches correct doctrine and has a proper testimony of holiness, and he should join that church, participate there, and identify with the

² “Double honor” - According to Matthew Henry Commentary, this phrase means double maintenance, they ought to receive double what others in their position would receive (conditional on their doing their job “well”).

³ “Participate” – [κοινωνε, w] to have communion, be a partner with someone.

body of Christ there. But this passage obligates every Christian to make a commitment with the man of God teaching and preaching there to sustain him (give him a livable wage). Of course this is between all in the church and the pastor, and one single person usually cannot support a man fully by himself, but each has to do his part to support the man of God laboring among them.

The Example of the Synagogues

The Jews used the system of synagogues. They would not organize a synagogue until they had 10 families (at least one in each with a living wage). Once they had those 10 core families, they would seek a Rabbi (a teacher of Scripture), and each family would give a tithe (10%) of their income faithfully each week. The Rabbi also tithed and his tithe went to incidentals like candles, benches, books, etc. Between all of them they would buy land and above their tithe they would give to buy materials and the construction workers would be the people of that synagogue. In this way, the Rabbi received a just salary, an average of the incomes of all those in the group.

God condemns those not paying workers

Leviticus 19:13 Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

Malachi 3:5 And I will come near to you to judgment... against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages...

James 5:4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

The principle of God is that we should pay for what we consume in this life. We should not seek what is free. As good Christians we have an obligation to demand that we sit under the ministry of someone who is righteous, holy, and a good man of God. But equally so we have an obligation

to pay him a just and worthy salary and not to defraud him. It is sad to see in so many cases a good man of God dedicated to the ministry and serving the people of God and living in horrible economic conditions fighting for the basics of life.

Haggai 1:4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? **5** Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. **6** Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. **9** Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

Mal. 3:8-11 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field...

God commands us to build the house of God (where we worship God) and to pay the minister there. We should bring our tithes "into the storehouse" so that there is meat in God's house. This speaks of gathering the tithes so that the ministers have something to eat. God punishes us in our personal economy if we are unfaithful in this obligation to the work of God.

1 Cor. 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.

Each Sunday, we should put aside for the offering a percentage of what we have earned that week.

Paying the Pastor

What is our obligation toward the Pastor?

By David Cox

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If the pastor takes care of the flock of God, who takes care of the pastor? Any pastor of animals lives of his work with them. This is not a hobby, and neither should the representative of God have to "work nights" in order to pay the rent and eat.

Our pastor fights against false doctrine, and at times has to rebuke individuals in the church for their sin. When these individuals are the principal tithers, there is a conflict that tempts him or makes it very difficult for him to do his job well. It is the entire church's obligation to constantly support him well if we want him to go after the sins that beset us. When some get mad and leave, we that remain faithful must sacrifice the more. It is our burden just as much as the pastor's to advance the cause of Christ in our church, under the direction of our pastor. This is a clear sign of our faithfulness to God.