

Does the Church Have the Right to Interfere With Its Members' Finances?

Does the church have the right to interfere with the members' finances? This question is raised by many people and on various occasions. Usually, people pose this question out of resentment, when the church will start to deal with sin in their lives and dishonesty pertaining to finances. Many don't want someone to interfere with their personal lives and with their finances, but the Scriptures has the final Word that we all need to comply with.

Does the church have the right to interfere with the members' finances? This question is also raised by genuine church leaders and pastors who really want to pastor their members in the righteousness of God, and they are questioning if they really need to interfere with their members' finances.

A person's financial state is one of the most personal things for most people and many prefer to keep their financial information from others. That is justifiable to some extent, but that should not be applied in the life of the members of the church. The Bible has a lot of teaching about finances and the church should teach about that. In order for the church to implement such teachings in the life of the members, she needs to scrutinize the financial position of each individual member. We will go through the Scriptures and will find the answers in the light of God's Word.

There are real reasons why the church and the pastor of the church should know the condition of the flock and know about their finances. They are listed below:

I. Is the church member working? “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.” (Ephesians 4:28 KJV) The pastor of the church should be sure that the church member is working. This is important because the Bible tells us the following: “6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 KJV) The pastor of the church should be sure that every member of his flock is working, because otherwise, the person who is lazy will try to steal like a thief from the labor of others without paying a price. So the pastor of the church should ask, ‘Are you working?’ If the answer ‘No’, then the pastor should ask, ‘How then you are living? What is the source of your living?’ The pastor of the church has to know the source of his living and make sure the member is not preying on others for his sustenance. He needs to be sure to apply Paul's instruction to Titus. “14 And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.” (Titus 3:14 KJV) Even in Paul's instruction to the Thessalonians, “10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10 KJV)

II. What is the income of the church member? The pastor should know exactly the source of income of the member and the amount because he needs to determine the amount of tithe and the firstfruit that the member should bring to the Lord: “8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10 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. 11 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, saith the LORD of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:8-12 KJV) “9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV) The pastor of the church should endeavor to teach the people to be givers to God and all that they give should be directed to one place, the church that the Lord has placed them in. “11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:” (Deuteronomy 12:11 KJV) As the pastor teaches all these aspects of giving, he should know the exact amount of the church member's income so that he can keep tag on whether the member is following the instructions of God's Word.

III. Does the church member have a debt? The pastor should teach the church member not to be in debt because, “7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” (Proverbs 22:7 KJV) The pastor of the church should advise and teach his members how to earn money to pay his or her debt and also be sustained in the same way Elisha advised the widow who was in debt: “1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. 3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. 4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.” (2 Kings 4:1-7 KJV) It is not the true love of God that the pastor shows when he is not aware that a member of his church is in debt and he is doing nothing about it. It is not the true love of God shown by the church when a family is in a financial struggle and the church does not know about it. How can the church reach out to them and help them with Godly instruction and advice if the matter is not disclosed?

IV. Is the church member has saving? The pastor should teach the members not to waste as Jesus had taught His disciples. “12 When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” (John 6:12 KJV) The pastor should

teach his members to save part of their income as Joseph had instructed Pharaoh to do in the time of plenty and keep it for the time of famine. “33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35 And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36 And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:33-36 KJV) The pastor should teach the members to save one-fifth of their income that is 20% to be kept as the reserve for the future, to face famine and hardships. With honest labor, a good capital can be built up for the future. “11 Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” (Proverbs 13:11 KJV)

V. The church should control the spending of the individual saving amount to ensure that the money is directed to the purpose: “44 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:44 KJV) So Patriarch Joseph was appointed to control the flow of the stored up food during the years of collection and the years of famine. * The pastor should be aware of the amount of savings and should be the one to approve the usage of the money saved to ensure that it is directed in accordance with God’s will. * Stored up money can be easily abused and be instrumental in establishing wrong relationships, for we know that wealth makes friends: “4 Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour.” (Proverbs 19:4 KJV) “6 Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.” (Proverbs 19:6 KJV) The pastor of the church should be aware that the church members who have money are more liable to be victimized by people who draw near to them with the motive of extracting or borrowing money.

VI. What about saving up for the next generation? The Bible teaches us that a good man leaves an inheritance for his children and that parents save up for their children. “22 A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.” (Proverbs 13:22 KJV) “... for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” (2 Corinthians 12:14 KJV) According to these Scriptures, it is the responsibility of the church to teach her members and to monitor that they save up for their children. Parents who don’t save for their children will bring poverty and ruin to their lives. “15 The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty.” (Proverbs 10:15 KJV) “24 The crown of the wise is their riches: but the foolishness of fools is folly.” (Proverbs 14:24 KJV)

VII. Is the member spending wisely? Wise spending is mandatory so that the church members can use their income to meet their needs, to meet the needs of giving to God, to help others and to keep the remaining as savings. The church should teach the members to economize their expenses and try to get free and cheap resources. “1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1 KJV) Avoid and cut unnecessary resources. “2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” (Isaiah 55:2 KJV) The pastor of the church should teach against worldliness and condemn the wrong style of living like eating expensive food, eating in restaurants and hotels, throwing parties, wearing expensive clothes, buying unnecessary

accessories and appliances and so on: “17 He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.” (Proverbs 21:17 KJV) “15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” (1 John 2:15-17 KJV)

VIII. Does the pastor or the church need to interfere with the food the member cooks and eats? In the book of Genesis, the Lord said to Adam, “17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:17 KJV) * The pastor should instruct the members not to eat certain food and discourage them from adopting certain eating habits that will cripple their finances and hinder them from being faithful stewards, to meet other needs of life. * Food can cause many health problems and affect the physical fitness of the church members. Therefore, the pastor of the church needs to instruct his church members regarding food. Moses with regard to the manna that God gave to the Israelites, directed them to do the following: “23 And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.” (Exodus 16:23 KJV) Peter and the apostles, and later on ‘the seven’ were in charge of the food that the church members were cooking and eating. “1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. 2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” (Acts 6:1-7 KJV) Many families who are part of the church face many financial problems and that forces them to take wrong decisions and actions. That happens because of worldliness and lack of wisdom in budgeting and spending. The church should be a big help to such kind of people by teaching them and helping them to implement the method of wise spending, eating healthy home cooked food with ingredients purchased at a low cost.

IX. Why should every member have savings and an extra amount of money kept aside? To help those who are in need. “9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.” (Proverbs 22:9 KJV) “12 Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14:12-14 KJV) “17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.” (Acts 24:17 KJV)

X. Should the church be the one to supervise the process of giving to the needy? The church has to monitor the source of money and evaluate the need and the motive for giving. “34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. 36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:34-37 KJV) The apostles were in charge of the ministry of giving for charitable purposes. Transparency is needed. No transaction of money, buying, selling, or borrowing should be carried out without the church pastor’s knowledge and approval.

XI. Is the church responsible to teach the people all these details? Yes, it is her responsibility to use the Scriptures wisely in order to direct the members to spend wisely and handle their finances correctly. If the church does not do that, who else will? We need to instruct every pastor of the church to do the following for the people in his congregation, “20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.” (Exodus 18:20 KJV) The church is accountable to God for the life of the people under her care. The church leaders are requested to give an account to God for the lives of the people under their care. “17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17 KJV) The job description of the church leaders is that they watch the souls that are entrusted to them.

XII. The church is responsible to investigate and discipline those who abuse, and sin in money affair: With regard to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, God used Peter to interfere and deal with it. “1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.” (Acts 5:1-11 KJV)

With regard to the sin of Achan, God interfered and dealt with that sin through the life of Joshua. God showed to Joshua how to find out the man who had sinned against God, and when Achan was taken to Joshua, the latter interrogated him and investigated his crime. “19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and

make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. 20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: 21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.” (Joshua 7:19-21 KJV) When Joshua heard what Achan had done, he sent men to the tent of Achan to bring from there what Achan had stolen and hidden in his tent. “22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. 23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.” (Joshua 7:22-23 KJV) Like Joshua, the church must investigate the sin of every member and deal with it so that people don’t die in their sins like Achan.

My dear and beloved: In front of the pastor of the church should be a financial report for each member that includes the following items:

- A. Work status
- B. Income
- C. Expenditure
- D. Debts
- E. Savings
- F. Tithes
- G. Various offerings
- H. Firstfruits
- I. Contribution to alms

The following is what I want to tell: “6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.” (1 Timothy 4:6 KJV)

God has entrusted His church to faithful ministers who need to be accountable to God and care well for the spiritual wellbeing of the people who are under their care. Therefore, apply and live what you have learned in this message and also pass on the blessing to the people who are under your care. Let us pray ...

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins and rose from death to give me eternal life. Lord thank you for your Word and the teaching that we received about the responsibility of the church to interfere with the individual finances of the members under her care. Lord thank you for all the corrections the rebukes and the admonishments that we received in this message.

Repent and renounce all your sins. Renounce your laziness, your non willingness to work, your abuse and taking advantage of others. Repent of your lack of tithing and not giving your offerings to God. Repent of your bad stewardship, your non wise spending, and squandering your money on parties, expensive clothes, expensive food, eating in restaurants, buying expensive mobiles, cars, gold, and other things that you don’t need. Repent of your lack of saving and keeping for the future. Repent of your lack of preparing an inheritance for your children. Repent of your lack of giving to the poor and needy. Repent of your non willingness

to pay your debts. Repent of your lack of transparency in pertains to your finances. Repent of your lack of reading God's Word and life of prayer. Repent of your non willingness to suffer for Christ and to serve Him. Lord forgive me, I repent and renounce the following sins

Lord thank you for your word in this message that set before me a clear way that I need to go through and work on my personal life so that you will be pleased with me and in order to set myself as good example to others. Lord I commit myself to go along your Word and the plan that you had ordained for me to go through. Lord give me the needed wisdom in order to accomplish all such.

Lord, thank you for my Brothers and Sisters who repented of their sins and decided to live a honest and Godly life in the fear of you as you ordained for us in your Word that we studied in this message. Lord reward those who among them obedient to you and use them as good model to others to follow you. Lord protect them and provide all their needs in order to follow you and keep their service unto you.

Lord bless us as your church and help us to observe all our members, and monitor them in order to implement the teaching that we received in this message. Lord expose sins and help us to deal with sinners to restore them back to you. Lord we trust you that you will provide all the needs of the church and in all circumstances and at all times. Lord help us to continue to correct and admonish those who are in sin to bring them back to you and to your will. Lord refill us with the Holy Spirit and give us the Spiritual gifts that we need in our lives to go on and evangelize, and make new disciples and train new workers to go and plant new Bible studies and congregations for the church. Lord we pray for more people to be water Baptized and receive the Holy Spirit Baptism. Lord prepare us for your coming to go with you when you come. Lord take the message and spread it to bring the fruit that you desire to see in the life of your church and your people. Lord fulfill the vision of the church, 'Multiplication in peace with implementing the whole will of God.' Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

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