



Part Eight in the series: *"Towards a Christocentric Ecclesiology, or A Christ Centered Church"*

## **“Supporting Timothy Ministry”**

Because, with the fellowship I help to oversee, we have been processing through a Spirit led direction in the lives of those we gather with, I believe it is prophetically symbolic or typical of what many fellowships are or will be working through.

For this reason I believe it would be helpful for the body for me to articulate the things we are seeing in a specific area of Church life.

It has to do with providing financial provision for those in the body called to very specific acts of leadership, as Paul especially describes, in his communications, most especially in his communications to Timothy.

We live in a day where millions of believers are being called out of the systems Churches, towards a liberty in Christ to pursue deeper relationships horizontally and vertically. There is a deep longing for deeper human relationships, and certainly a passionate inward drive towards connecting with the Spirit of Jesus in a less program driven and man centered approach.

Along with these things the Lord is directing that each gathering begin to work through a clear understanding of provisioning the leadership He places in their midst, and calls into service to the broader body of Christ.

Many who have come out of traditional settings are so glad to put away the false doctrine and manipulations connected with tithing, that they are reticent to even consider the importance of financial support for those called to carry forward Kingdom work. In their thinking they financially supported a false system long enough, and so, having left it all, they have little desire, if any, to think through provisioning Kingdom ministers. And, there is a false understanding that while we no longer support a salaried clergy we should also not provide support to anyone other than Church planting apostles. But, this important area of Church life must not be relegated to the “throw out the baby with the bath water,” category. To come to biblical understandings here will help keep the reformation of the Church moving forward, at the speed God desires, rather than send all the Kingdom workers into the general full time work force, and away from their divine callings.

### **Two levels of Kingdom ministry**

In this regards we recognize at least two very specific levels of Kingdom ministry, beyond that which all believers are involved in ministry. Those two functions are:

1. Pauline in nature - I.e. the apostolic Church planting role of father, teacher, prophet, and mentor.

As well as,

2. Timothy in nature - I.e. not necessarily focused on Church planting, but more the teacher, exhorter, encourager, and equipper of the body.

Both roles existed in the early Church, and yet, while there were overlapping callings, there are some distinctions that may help the body to assimilate and honor these callings.

Whatever our concept of leadership is, as we have spoken clearly of in other articles on this site, it has nothing to do with “control and hierarchy.” Of this we are clear, and unwavering.

Most in the body are trained to settle in their hearts that the Church they will “attend,” rather than “be,” is based on finding an “Apostolic Father Figure,” who they feel has the kind of fathering and shepherd’s heart that they can rest comfortably under. While this is certainly a desirable relationship to find, it seems not be one the New Testament describes as being essential for every believer, and certainly it no where indicates a believer should forsake a gathering for, if such a “Father Figure” wasn’t present.

But, neither does the New Testament describe such a figure as being the only minister worthy of financial support, and in a day where we are all attempting to discover God’s pattern for ministry, and those we are to support, much more needs to be said about the “Timothy Role” of leadership, that will more likely characterize the leaders we will all relate to on a more regular basis.

Paul is very clear, in his writings, that not just the father’s were worthy of support, but also the Timothy’s, Barnabas’, Epaphroditus’, Silas’, Titus’, etc. They carry on the functions of mentoring/equipping when the father/apostle moves on to establish Churches in other places. Their role is critical to the health and life of each fellowship, and they were to be supported, just like the father/apostles. And, similar to the Church planting apostles, they will most frequently move among a local body of believers, or at times translocal body, and even international body, ministering to their needs, rather than continually and only remaining in one given fellowship.

Paul tells us, those who feed us spiritual things are to be shared with in natural things. If the Timothys have fed you spiritual things, from the storehouse of His revelations to them, and I’m certain they have, is this not what Paul is referring to? They may not be a “Father” to you, as Paul was apparently to many, but are they not a Teacher to you? He indicates both Fathers and Teachers are worthy of financial support.

### **Consider Paul’s approach**

Listen to Paul describe how financial support is to look among the fellowships:

Galatians 6:6 One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches.

This clearly indicates teaching leaders are to be cared for financially. We do not see here a necessity of understanding that they are to receive anything like full financial support necessarily, but also nothing here would forbid it either. Each leader in the New Testament

appears to have also been encouraged to have additional means of support other than through their ministry. Visualize “tent making.”

1Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? 14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. 15 But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. 16 For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. 18 What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel. 19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

## **Two issues to work through**

Paul’s words to the Corinthians are instructive in at least two ways, and those two ways are relevant to every age of the Church.

1. The Corinthian Church struggled greatly with concepts of financial support for the ministry God sent to them. They maligned Paul, so as to avoid supporting him. They challenged his wisdom and revelation, so as to avoid funding his ministry endeavors.

Much of Paul’s discussions with them, surrounded issues of support. He knew that unless they worked through their attitudes towards him it would hinder the flow of God’s revelation through him to them. He did not let up on it, because it was far more an issue of honor towards God, than it was in just putting some money in his pocket. The money issue was never the big deal with him. He was concerned for their souls, in the way they were processing money and support issues. For this reason he wouldn’t even let them support him until they worked through these issues.

2. They failed to follow through on even their commitments to support the poorer brethren in Judea, whom they had committed to send money to, to help them in a time of dire need. I.e. the Corinthians truly struggled with a “me centered” orientation towards the Kingdom. They were clear on what they wanted God to do for them, but they were uncertain as to how to connect with His burdens for His Kingdom. (2 Cor. 8)

Nothing has changed. We still struggle with exactly the same things. Turning money loose, for Kingdom pursuits is hard, especially in our day where so many ministers have perverted the whole area with their lavish and extravagant lifestyles, false teachings on the Tithe, and their false doctrines of “give to get.”

The answer is not to pressure or try to force the body to give, but rather to gently instruct in the way of Christ in these areas. Paul was so committed to not force the Corinthians, that he wouldn’t even let them give to him, because of their attitudes about the matter. It would have caste him into a role of encouraging them to give out of dishonor towards himself and God, and he was not willing to do this. Better to not allow anyone to give to

leadership until they can do so out of honor to Christ.

It must be that we point the people back to listening to Jesus within them, rather than to attempt to pressure, convince, or argue them into giving. If it isn't all about Jesus, then it is an impure thing, and God knows we don't need any more of that stuff...

### Here is how the Timothy role looks

1Ti 4:6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being **trained in the words of the faith** and of the **good doctrine** that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather **train yourself for godliness**; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we **toil and strive**, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 11 **Command and teach these things**. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but **set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity**. 13 Until I come, **devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching**. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 **Practice these things, devote yourself to them**, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1. Leaders are to receive training in the Word of God and faith, so they will be equipped to equip the body in the same. I'm not convinced bible colleges and seminaries are the best place for this, but at times God seems to lead this way for a season. Better to be mentored and trained by a seasoned leader in the body.
2. Leaders are to walk in good/sound doctrine, the kind that is from Christ, not growth seminars, man centered agenda approaches, but reflects the Word Himself.
3. Leaders are to work hard at their calling. Leadership is not some casual, flippant thing, but rather requires serious labor and hard work. Up early, long days, late nights, studying to show themselves approved of God. (2 Tim. 2:15)
4. Leaders are to command and teach the things of God. They are not to be easy pushovers, nor are they to teach their own opinions.
5. Leaders must set a good example. This does not mean a perfect example. No one is perfect, but they must be transparent, honest, repentive, and deeply serious about their call to holiness.
6. Leaders are to focus the gathering of the saints preeminently on Jesus Christ, and then on scripture, exhortation, and teaching. While others may or may not feel led to do these things, leaders have no luxury to slack off in these areas. This largely defines their role and who they are to the body. It is their modus operandi among the saints. They are the champions of Word impartation from Christ, first and foremost.

This does not mean they are to dominate every gathering, or turn every gathering into their platform to teach and preach. Teaching must exude from their lives in all settings at all times. This will include special times of teachings, but they must not think of the

gatherings as their special time to force the body to hear from them. At times they will do well to set aside specific times of teachings, that the body is invited to partake in. Even there, it should incorporate “dialegomai/dialogue,” as with Paul - Acts 20:7.

7. Leaders practice and devote themselves to these things. The entire body of Christ is to similarly pursue these issues, but the leaders must be characterized by this, otherwise they are not qualified to lead.

### **Honor is at issue here**

Both honor towards the Lord directly, and indirectly, in the way they care for the leaders He leads among them.

These are not necessarily ones who travel internationally much of the time. They are also those who remain more locally fixed. Both types existed because the body needed both.

1Ti 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered **worthy of double honor**, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

Both the context, and the very etymology of this phrase “worthy of double honor,” communicated both respect and monetary support. All of the most studied scholars agree on this matter. You cannot think that you honor the Lord when you fail to respect and provide for those who feed you His Words. It is to dishonor the very content and Person of His Word.

3Jn 1:6 who testified to your love before the church. **You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God.**

No solid commentator understands John to be saying anything other than, “Provide monetary support for the teachers who move among the body of Christ.

### **This principle originates in Jesus**

Jesus, when training His disciples, laid a pattern that the early Church clearly understood as the approach to caring for the teachers who build up the body.

Mat 10:5 These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. **You received without paying; give without pay.** 9 Acquire no gold nor silver nor copper for your belts, 10 no bag for your journey, nor two tunics nor sandals nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. 11 And **whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart.** 12 As you enter the house, greet it. 13 And **if the house is worthy**, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. 15 Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Paul alludes to this passage, in 1 Corinthians 9

1Co 9:14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel **should get their living by the gospel.**

Paul could only have been referring to the Matthew 10 passage.

They were not to be men who would refuse to minister unless paid, BUT, the body of Christ would be in serious trouble with the Lord if they did not receive their words and care for their needs.

The phrase “worthy house,” was clearly understood to manifest itself in two ways:

1. Receiving the teachings as being from God.
2. Caring for the physical needs of those ministering.

### **The Early Church had a measure of understanding in this area**

A passage out of a fascinating text, that was written in 110 AD, just after John the apostle died, which has always been given a high degree of credence by the early Church, reflects the thinking of the apostles in this area. It comes from a document titled “The Didache.” While we cannot support the entire theology of their words, nor can we be confident that they accurately reflect the teachings of the apostles in their entirety, nevertheless we do see indications we believe worthy of note. I will quote just one section:

#### Chapter 13.—Support of Prophets

1. But every true prophet that wills to abide among you is worthy of his support.
2. So also a true teacher is himself worthy, as the workman, of his support. Matthew 10:10; cf. Luke 10:7
3. Every first-fruit, therefore, of the products of wine-press and threshing-floor, of oxen and of sheep, you shall take and give to the prophets, for they are your ~~high-priests~~.
4. But if you have not a prophet, give it to the poor.
5. If you make a batch of dough, take the first-fruit and give according to the commandment.
6. So also when you open a jar of wine or of oil, take the first-fruit and give it to the prophets;
7. and of money (silver) and clothing and every possession, take the first-fruit, as it may seem good to you, and give according to the commandment.

I used “strike out” through the words “high priest,” because I suspect this reflects the errors that were beginning to creep into the Church, thanks to such men as Ignatius, and others of his persuasion. After the death of John they moved quickly to distort the biblical roles of leadership, into something very ugly and hierarchal, but at the very least this passage indicates they had some continued understanding of the importance of support for those called to give themselves to Kingdom work.

These words imply consistent support, rather than sporadic and occasional support. I know we resist the notion of Church staff roles, and these words do not support such a thing, but they do clearly indicate a consistency of giving, led by the Spirit, towards those who feed our souls, and those called to touch the broader Kingdom.

Here are the principles:

1. Leaders consistently have financial needs.
2. Leaders consistently teach, exhort, read, and minister.
3. Therefore, consistently support them so that they are enabled to continue their important work among the body.

This should be obvious to all of us, but because money and ministry have such a negative stigma in our day, and well they should, given all the abuses, we all need to rethink this area and rise up to the call and blessing of it.

When the income ministers receive begin to exceed their basic monthly moderate needs, they are wisest if they establish an advisory relationship with some brothers they can be accountable to, to help them establish a reasonable salary to receive from their ministry accounts. In this way they avoid excess and extravagance, and they hold up a standard of accountability and moderation before the body, towards a purification of this challenged area of Church life.

When the body honors God in the way they care for those sent among them to teach and train them they will experience His unique blessings upon their lives. It is wrong to give to get, but it is true that those who give at His leading will be blessed of Him for doing so. It all has to do with motive. If my motive is to give to get, then it is impure. If it is to give to honor, then God will bless it. How that blessing will look is up to God. It may be monetary blessing, or it may come in other forms, but God will manifest His pleasure at our obedience to His leading.

I know these are hard things for the body of Christ to work through, but work through them we must. Too much is at stake. If we force all Kingdom workers back into the general work force as full time workers, and away from their primary callings, we deprive the body from the ministry Jesus wants to give it.

And, because many of these brethren will not be the “Father local” type leaders, who remain close to you, and hover about your lives to provide a great deal of personal care, but are rather given to teach and train the entire body, we need not commit support to only those who dwell within our own local fellowship of believers, but, as with the Timothys of Paul’s day, they feed us, move on, and later return to feed us again. These are often men and women who are given to the body “large,” rather than just the body “local.” Therefore, who feeds your soul, and who has God connected you to, in terms of supporting their ministry both local and extra local? God will do this! He is raising up men and women, around the globe, who are called of His Spirit to care for the local and extra local fellowships. They are His reforming instruments, and for them to do the work they’ve been called to, they are going to need a host of supporters, who share Jesus’ vision for their lives and the work they will accomplish. Thus, it takes a prophetic burden from God to know your place of provision for these individuals.

There is nothing wrong with some of these ministers having tent making jobs, but to say that they all must do so is to miss Paul's words to the Corinthians:

1Co 9:5 Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? 6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

Obviously Paul's words are to be taken to mean that the majority of the other apostles were permitted by Christ to refrain from working for a living. We must not require of all kingdom workers to also carry tent making jobs. In some cases God will lead them to do so, and this is fine, but we must not force them, out of failure to follow the Spirit's leading, to pursue working for a living when He would prefer they give themselves full time to the work of extending the kingdom and equipping the saints.

### **Times of Reformation**

The Church is passing through the most significant season of reformation it has ever seen. There is not likely one pastor of a traditional Church, who does not feel the pressure of the Spirit towards change. Some of them will leave their traditional posts for the smaller and more simple functions, but all are hearing the winds of change that are blowing.

If the Church is to move into the things God is speaking in these days, she will need to rise to her call to support those who are being led to articulate and further His reformation. The last thing we need is another movement of man, or man's reformation. This time we must let Jesus Christ lead, and one of the facets of His leadership is to raise up men and women, whom He can commit the callings to equip His bride for what is coming. Often this means money, but far more than money it requires unique understandings of honor towards Christ.

This is an exciting day. May God help us to arise to our places within this reformation. For some it will be encouragement, support, and prayer, and for others it will be writing, teaching, preaching, traveling, and planting, but each must know their call and walk in it faithfully.

God bless you, and those you relate to, who will work through these matters for His glory!

Serving His Body  
Tom Sparks