



Principles for Provisioning the Minister

The following article provides the biblical framework for understanding God's approach to financial support for those called to teach, equip, and establish the Church. We will see that He desires all apostles, teachers of the Word, and teaching elders, to receive some degree of financial support from the body of Christ.

We will also note that it is likely, in the greater portion of those called to minister the Word, there will be a need for a bi-vocational approach, though this would not be a necessity if God were to lead the body to provide full support.

Issues of reciprocity, thankfulness, greed, non manipulation, and a servants heart, all factor into the total picture.

1. The Primary New Testament passage on Ministry Provision is 1 Corinthians 9.

A. Apostles are deserving of financial provision.

While Paul, in his writings, does not limit financial support to just apostles, he makes it very clear they are deserving of full support.

1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? 2 If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. 3 This is my defense to those who would examine me. 4 Do we not have the right to eat and drink? 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?

1 Corinthians 16:6 and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, *so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go.*

Romans 15:24 I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and *to be helped on my journey there by you,* once I have enjoyed your company for a while.

Paul wasn't embarrassed about discussing his desire for financial support, in doing the work of the ministry. It was clear to him and to them, that it wasn't about lining his pockets, and providing him with a posh lifestyle. It was entirely about furthering the work of extending and maturing the Kingdom...period!

B. Every type of labor is worthy of compensation, and the labor of communicating the Word of God is no exception.

1 Corinthians 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? 8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? 10 Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

The Church outside the walls must come to grips with the reality that ministry resourcing is not an unbiblical concept. Just because we have all seen it abused, doesn't mean the whole area is wrong. From God's perspective, those who labor, no matter what the legitimate labor, must be compensated so that they can continue to perform their labors.

C. Spiritual provision should receive financial provision, whether through apostles, teachers, or elders.

1 Corinthians 9:11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 12a If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

Motives are critical, when it comes to money and ministers.

1 Corinthians 9:12b 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.

Financial provision for spiritual service is not man's idea, but the Lord's command.

1 Corinthians 9:13 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.

It is wrong to expect, manipulate for, demand, or intimidate anyone in the area of giving. Their motivation in giving, and the motivation for teaching the body in these delicate areas, requires the highest attention to pure motives and the leading of the Spirit. It is about honoring Christ and extending His Kingdom. It is about doing so by honoring the servants He sends our way to plant, equip, and feed us. It has nothing to do with making a minister wealthy, or making certain he has the best of everything. It is a false teaching to imply that God wants all His kids wealthy, so we'll start by making His ministers wealthy.

1 Corinthians 9:15 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.

On the part of the teacher...all is given “free of charge.” The receiver alone, before the Lord, must be the deciding factor for when financial assistance is given.

Clearly the things Paul believed, along the lines of financial support for those involved in ministry of the Word, he consistently taught in each place he ministered.

Romans 15:25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints.²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed *they owe it to them*. For *if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings*.

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

1 Timothy 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*."

We note in both the Galatians and 1 Timothy passages, the references to teachers and elders being worthy recipients of financial support, thus it is clear Paul did not limit financial support for just those involved in itinerant Church planting.

God’s way is the way of reciprocity in love. The receivers receive and give from the fulness of what they have received. The teacher is blessed and enabled to give again.

While “double honor” unlikely refers to “double wage,” as some would imply, there is little question that Paul does have in mind monetary blessings for those who labor in preaching and teaching. The structure of Greek, lying behind the word “tima” clearly indicates a financial element to Paul’s choice of words here. This, in combination with “wages,” and all he has taught in other passages, makes this abundantly clear. Even in the 1 Timothy 5 passage, we see him use the word “tima” in this manner, in verse 3, in conjunction with financially caring for those who are truly needy widows.

We know from Church history that no ministers in the early Church received anything like a consistent agreed upon salary, so that Paul’s reference to “wages,” has nothing to do with our modern day approach of hiring a minister, agreeing on a set salary, and paying him monthly. All giving was spontaneous, as led by the Spirit, and given directly to the teachers by those receiving the benefit of their ministry, from those wanting to provision the minister for further ministry and travels. Thus wage implies compensation for service rendered, but not a set monthly salary for a hired minister.

This is not to say that a minister should not receive a set salary, but it does not come from any institution, nor is it based on a particular set of people hiring him. If giving towards his ministry increases to the place where the monies received exceed his reasonable monthly needs, then he is wisest to establish a ministry bank account, put the extra monies in that account, work with a team of advisors, and determine what would be an appropriate and modest monthly salary to take from that account.

In this way excess is avoided, along with the attendant abuses of ministry monies.

3. The Dangers of Greed, the importance of hard work, and the focus on service.

In the following passages we will observe the intense care Paul gave to making it absolutely clear his ministry was not about money, but about service.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, *nor with a pretext for greed*--God is witness.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 For you remember, brothers, *our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you*, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.
10 You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers.

2 Thessalonians 3:7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, *but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you*. 9 It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.

Acts 20:33 *I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel*. 34 You yourselves know that *these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me*. 35 In all things I have shown you that *by working hard* in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, *'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*"

Ministering for the wrong reasons, is all too prevalent in the ministry, and Paul is adamant that it must not be to get "gain." In our day, with the current degree of reformation, the majority of brothers coming out of traditional Churches, having had full time Church salaries, will need to learn to manage a bi-vocational approach to ministry, as Paul did.

In part, this is because the majority of the Church, coming out of traditional settings has never been taught on how to directly provision a minister, are burned out on the emphasis of Church tithes, building programs, missions pressure and offerings, and will need time to make the transition into full understanding of this area. In the meantime, ministers must feed their families, pay their bills, and conduct their ministries, so being bi-vocational will generally be their lot. To push the body, ahead of their readiness, will only abort a good thing, and lead to additional wounds.

4. All giving must begin with an "Honor the Lord" motivation.

2 Corinthians 8:1 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- 5 and this, not as we expected, but *they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us*.

Pro 3:9 Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

While we can reference this verse, to illustrate the OT principle of all giving as being "unto the Lord in honor," we would not connect the New Covenant to the Old Covenant laws of firstfruits or tithe.

If all giving isn't first and foremost "unto the Lord," in honor of all He has provided, then any other motivation used to secure monetary support for the ministry will fall short.

5. Right Motives in Giving will result in fruit and blessings from God.

Philippians 4:10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. 14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but ***I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.*** 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And ***my God will supply every need*** of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 9:6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and ***whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*** 7 Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And ***God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*** 9 As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 ***You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity,*** which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others,...

These two passages couldn't be clearer. While the motivation for giving must never be to get, and certainly must never be to get wealthy. It is clear that God loves to bless the generous giver so that he is able to give again. In this manner the body grows in service to the Lord, by caring for the poor, the needy, and those who minister the Word, and God adds back so the flow never ceases.

At the end of the day, a fruit will increase and last for all eternity. What a privilege to work together with Him, in this grand purpose.