

# The Pastor and Money

– Charles R. Lane



In our society, cultural values around money stand in such striking contrast to biblical values. The biblical message of giftedness and generosity offers a powerful alternative to our cultural emphasis on accumulation.

It is vital for the pastor to be at the center of a congregation's stewardship ministry. There may be some resistance to this involvement. In some congregations a strong distinction exists between what might be called the "business" life of the congregation and the spiritual life of the congregation. In these congregations, the business life includes paying the bills and raising the money necessary for this to happen. The spiritual life of the congregation includes prayer, worship, Christian service, and the like. When this distinction holds, local business leaders expect to lead the business life of the congregation while the pastor leads the spiritual life of the congregation.

It is important to name this as the non-biblical distinction that it is. According to this distinction, talk about money is always connected to getting the bills paid. In the Gospels, Jesus' talk about money centers on how a person's relationship with money impacts that person's relationship with his or her Lord.

Nothing destroys this non-biblical distinction faster than the pastor providing strong leadership in stewardship ministry, calling the congregation to a consideration of the intimate connection between money and discipleship. There are many ways this can happen.

- The pastor, as an active member of the stewardship committee, calls this committee back to the biblical message, a task for which the pastor is uniquely equipped.
- The pastor regularly preaches on financial stewardship, inviting worshipers to consider how their relationship with money connects to their relationship with Jesus. The role of money is a big issue in most people's lives. The Gospels are

full of accounts of Jesus talking about money. The opportunity to connect the biblical message with pressure points in people's lives is powerful.

- The pastor models effective stewardship. This includes ignoring all cultural taboos that tell us money should not be talked about in public. It also includes the pastor being very open about his or her giving and motivation for giving. A pastor who is willing to tell how much is given to the congregation and other ministries, and why this much is given, is a pastor who has taken a huge step toward being an effective stewardship leader.
- Finally, and I know this is controversial, I believe it is very helpful for the pastor to know how much people in the congregation give. Jesus is very clear that money can be a stumbling block between people and their Lord. How is the pastor to help people navigate this stumbling block if the pastor is in the dark?



Incredible things happen when the place of money in a congregation moves from that which is needed to pay the bills to that which influences each person's relationship with Jesus. People have another way to connect daily life with Jesus. People have another opportunity to grow in faith. When people experience the joy of generosity, they can discover a whole new level of meaning to Jesus' words, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34).



*HEART PRAYER*

*God, please give me a heart that can hold all of the good things in life:  
A heart with compassion and kindness,  
With gentleness and patience,  
And a heart that is open to spontaneity and joy.  
Please form in me a heart that listens to all of your messages of love;  
One that trusts, always looking for the goodness hidden in others;  
One that will readily share the gifts you have given,  
And one that can hope beyond difficulties.  
Grant me a peaceful heart that will hold on to the real values in life  
So that I can respond with assurance to what is important;  
Give me a heart that is grounded in love rather than fear;  
One that is open to the needs of others  
And will reach out with sincerity.  
Please God, give me a heart filled with your Spirit.  
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