

Does the Church have the Right to interfere with the Members Finances?

This question is raised by some church people out of resentment of why others are interfering with their income and finances. This question is also raised up by genuine church leaders and pastors who really want to pastor their members with the righteousness of God.

Finances are one of a personal thing and many had put barriers to seclude their finances information from others. That to some extent is correct, but that should not be applied to the life of the members of the church. The bible has lot of teaching about finances and the church should teach about that; and in order for the church to implement such teaching in the life of the members, then the church need to inspect the individual members' finances. We will go through the Scripture and will find a light to the feet and a path of life for each individual believer who would love to follow God and for each church leader to pastor their members with God's will and plan.

1- Is the church member working? *“Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.” (Ephesians 4:28)* The pastor of the church should be sure that the church member is working or has some sort of work and service. This is important because the bible tell us the following: *“19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.” (Genesis 3:19)* God had commanded Adam to work. *“6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” (2Thessalonians 3:6-10)* So the pastor of the church should be sure that every member of his flock is working and has a service because otherwise then the person who is lazy and not working is a thief and stealing from the labour of others. So the pastor of the church should ask, *“Are you working?”* If the answer *“No,”* then the pastor should ask *“How then are you living? What is the source of your living?”* The pastor should verify that the church member is not stealing or taking advantage of others for his living. He needs to be sure to apply Paul instruction to Titus: *“Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.” (Titus 3:14)*

2- How much the income of the church member? The pastor should know exactly the source of income and the amount of that income, because he needs to determine the amount of the tithe and the first fruit that the member should bring to the Lord: *“8 Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ “In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. 12 “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Malachi 3:8-12)* *“9 Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10)* The pastor of the church should endeavour to teach the people to be givers to God and all what they give should be directed to one place, the church, that the Lord had place

them in, *“Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD.” (Deuteronomy 12:11)* The pastor therefore should teach all these aspects of giving.

3- Is the church member has a debt? The pastor should teach the church member not to be at all under debt because, *“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.” (Proverbs 22:7)* The pastor of the church should advice and teach his members how to work it out to reproduce an income to pay their debt and to support their living as we can read here what Elisha did to advice the widow who was in debt, *“1 The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.” 2 Elisha replied to her, “How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?” “Your servant has nothing there at all,” she said, “except a small jar of olive oil.” 3 Elisha said, “Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. 4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.” 5 She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another one.” But he replied, “There is not a jar left.” Then the oil stopped flowing. 7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.” (2Kings 4:1-7)*

4- Is the church members has saving? The pastor should teach the members not to waste as Jesus taught his disciples, *“When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, “Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.” (John 6:12)* and to save part of their income, as Joseph instructed Pharaoh to do in facing famine, *“33 And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. 34 Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. 35 They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. 36 This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.” (Genesis 41:33-36)* The pastor should teach the member to save one fifth of their income that is 20% and to be kept in reserve for the future to face famine and future hard ships. Little by little a good capital will be build up for the future, *“Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.” (Proverbs 13:11)*

5- The church should control the spending of the saving amount to ensure that it is directed to the purpose: *“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.” (Genesis 41:44)* 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 about the amount of saving and should be in charge to approve the disposal of the saved money to ensure that is directed in accordance to God's will. Stored money can be easily abused and promote wrong relationships *“4 Wealth attracts many friends, but even the closest friend of the poor person deserts them.” (Proverbs 19:4)* *“6 Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of one who gives gifts.” (Proverbs 19:6)* Our church members who have money are more liable to be victimized by people who draw near to them for the sake to get money.

6- What about saving up for the next generation? The bible teaches us that good man leaves an inheritance for his children and that parents save up for their children, *“A good person leaves an inheritance for their children's children,” (Proverbs 13:22a)* *“After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.” (2Corinthians 12:14b)* Therefore according to these scriptures it is in the responsibility of the church to teach their members and to monitor them to save up for

their children. Parents who are not saving for their children will bring poverty and ruin into the life of their children, ***“The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor.”*** (Proverbs 10:15) ***“The wealth of the wise is their crown, but the folly of fools yields folly.”*** (Proverbs 14:24)

7- Is the member is spending wisely? Wise spending is mandatory so that the church members can use their income to meet their needs and to meet the needs of giving to God and to help others. The church should teach the members to economize their expenses, trying to get free and cheap resources, ***“1 Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”*** (Isaiah 55:1) To avoid and cut unnecessary resources, ***“2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.”*** (Isaiah 55:2) The pastor of the church should teach against worldliness and condemn wrong style of living like eating expensive food, eating in restaurants and hotels, making parties and feasting sessions, wearing expensive clothes, buying unnecessary accessories and appliances: ***“Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich.”*** (Proverbs 21:17) ***“15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”*** (1John 2:15-17)

8- Do the pastor or the church need to interfere with the food the member eat and cook? In Genesis 2 the Lord said to Adam, ***“but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”*** (Genesis 2:17) The pastor should instruct the members not to eat certain food or adopt certain eating style that will cripple their finances and hinder them from being faithful to meet other needs of life. Moses in regard to the manna that God gave to the Israelites he directed them to do the following: ***“He said to them, “This is what the LORD commanded: ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’”*** (Exodus 16:23) Peter and the apostles and later on the seven were in charge of the food that the church members are eating, ***“1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”*** (Acts 6:1-7) Many families who are part of the church are facing many financial problems that force them to take wrong decision and actions. All that because of worldliness and lack of wisdom in budgeting. 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.

9- Help those who are in need: Why every member should have saving and an extra amount of money kept aside? To help those who are in need. ***“The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor.”*** (Proverbs 22:9) ***“12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”*** (Luke 14:12-14) ***“After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings.”*** (Acts 24:17)

10- The church should be the one to supervise the process of giving to the needy: That to monitor the source of money, to evaluate the need and the motive of giving, ***“34 that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35 and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.”*** (Acts 4:34-37) The apostles were in charge in the ministry of charity. Transparency is needed; therefore no transaction of money, buying, selling or borrowing money should be done without the church pastor knowledge and approval.

11- Is the church responsible to teach the people all these details? Yes it is the church responsibility to use the Scripture wisely in order to direct the members how to spend wisely and handle their finances correctly. This we instruct the church and the pastor to do for the people, ***“Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave.”*** (Exodus 18:20) The church is accountable to God for the life of the people under its care. The church leaders are requested to give an account to God for the life of the people under its care, ***“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”*** (Hebrews 13:17)

12- The church is responsible to investigate and discipline those who abuse and sin in money affair: In regard to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, ***“1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. 3 Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.” 5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.”*** (Acts 5:1-6) In regard to the sin of Achan, ***“22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. 23 They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the LORD.”*** (Joshua 7:22-23)

Therefore in front of the pastor of the church should be a portfolio of each member a financial statement that includes the following:

Work	Income	Tithes	Offerings	Firstfruits	Saving	Debt	Expenditures	Help
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My Dear and Beloved: ***“If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.”*** (1Timothy 4:6) as you agree to pray. **My Prayer:** ***Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life. Lord I commit myself to apply these principles of stewardship in my life and to teach them to those under my care. Give me the strength and the perseverance to do that, this is my prayer in Jesus name. Amen.***

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