

**The Church You Can Read about in the Bible
What should the church do with its collected funds? #2**

Intro: In our previous lessons we answered the question, “For what purpose was the local church formed? In other words, what is its mission? (5 purposes)

- The local church gives visibility to God’s redemptive purposes.**
- It brings together God's people for corporate worship.**
- It provides ongoing instruction to God’s people.**
- It brings accountability to those who profess to be disciples.**
- It provides a means by which God’s people may work together.**

The local church has leadership and a treasury by which the members can join together in accomplishing certain things. So in our last lesson we began to answer the question, “What did the church you read about in the Bible do with their collected funds? Or for what purpose did the local church collect funds?

As we answer this question, let’s remember how we can know what God wants His people to do:

- He tells them what to do through statements and commands**
- He shows them what to do through Holy Spirit guided examples**
- He implies what they should do through the logical use of the first two.**

In our last lesson we saw that the church used their collected funds to assist fellow-Christians in times of need.

The church in Jerusalem collected funds to assist their fellow-Christians in times of need (Ac. 2,4,6).

The church in Antioch collected funds to assist their fellow-Christians in Judea in times of need (Ac. 11).

The churches among the Gentiles collected funds to assist their fellow-Christians in Jerusalem in times of need (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9; Rom. 16). Later when Paul wrote to Timothy and gave him instructions about how to set in order the congregation in Ephesus, he taught him about the role of the church in helping the needy widows there as well. (1Tim. 5).

However he also revealed that the church should not be burdened with the peculiar responsibilities of the individual believer. (1 Tim. 5) (Why should any believer ask other Christians to provide what they are able and obligated to provide in honoring their parents?)

Following these principles the church at Perry Heights has for many years assisted needy saints both among us and in other places.

Now let’s consider another thing that the church you can read about in the Bible did with their collected funds.

Our thesis: The church used their collected funds to support those who devoted their time to teaching the word (gospel preachers and teachers).

The support of those who teach the gospel is grounded in two important principles.

Continuing the Lord's work includes proclaiming the gospel to the lost and instructing the saved.

Jesus Himself acknowledged that preaching the gospel was an integral part of His mission.

"But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose. And He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea." (Luke 4:43-44, NASB)

He chose and prepared the twelve with this purpose in mind:

And He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, (Mark 3:14, NASB)

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15, NASB)

After Jesus' ascension they continued to carry out the Lord's purpose by preaching in Jerusalem and then Samaria.

And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. (Acts 5:42, NASB)

Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. (1 Corinthians 16:10, NASB)

The Lord ordained that those who do the teaching be supported in that work so that they may have a livelihood.

Jesus urged his disciples to proclaim the gospel without charge to sinners, but to accept the support of those who believed the gospel.

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give. "Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support." (Matthew 10:8-10, NASB)

Later Paul would apply these principles to himself as a preacher of the gospel.

The concept of the support of teachers had OT precedent in the support of the priests who were the teachers of the Lord's OT law.

"Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:13-14, NASB)

And so in consideration of these principles, we can see that the church used their collected funds to support those who preached and taught the gospel.

During their lengthy period of ministry in and around Jerusalem, the apostles would have accepted the support of the believers of the early church in fulfillment of what the Lord had said to them.

Moreover we can see that when congregations were established in other places the church sent teachers to help, again presumably with the needed support to provide their own needs.

“And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.” (Acts 11:22–24, NASB)

The church in Antioch likewise sent Paul and Barnabas out on their first teaching journey to teach in Cyprus and the Galatian region. *And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*” (Acts 13:2–3, NASB)

Certainly there were times when preachers like Paul did not rely upon the support of others, but worked at his trade of tent-making to support himself. However, he acknowledges not only his right to be supported (1 Cor. 9) but also the fact that he did at times receive contributions from congregations as support to preach.

“I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to serve you;” (2 Corinthians 11:8, NASB)

By using the word “robbed” Paul did not intend to suggest that his actions were criminal, but rather that the Corinthians were the beneficiaries of the contributions and not those who sent them. Later in his letter to Philippians Paul acknowledge and praised with thanksgiving the contribution the church sent to him in Rome.

“And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.” (Philippians 4:15–17, NASB)

Finally consider that just as Paul urged the church to “honor” widows indeed by providing for their needs, so also he urged the church to “honor” those labor in word and doctrine.

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”” (1 Timothy 5:17–18, NASB)

Conclusion: What this abundance of NT evidence suggests is that supporting the work of preaching the gospel is an important work that Christians do together; and the local church provides the means by which that can be done.

In our attempts to be like the church you can read about in the Bible, we regularly use our collected funds to support those who preach the gospel, not only locally, but in several other parts of the world just like the church you can read about in the Bible.

As we do, we are continuing the Lord's ministry of teaching on earth.

We are fulfilling his commission to spread the gospel to all creation/

We are reaping the fruit to our account as souls enter the kingdom.

Today it appears that most churches have lost sight of the divine purpose to save souls by preaching the gospel to as many people as possible. Instead many churches have focused upon things without Biblical precedent (among are things like providing social services, day care, facilities for recreation, and entertainment.) Is there Scriptural justification for these things? In our upcoming lessons we'll investigate these practices together in light of the word of God.