

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Should Your Pastor Discuss Your Giving With You?

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“Tom. Judy. Thank you for coming to meet me today,” said Pastor Johnson. “I know that you have been busy, but thank you for making the time.”

Inquisitively, Tom replies, “Well, it’s always a pleasure to talk, but we are really not sure what this is about.”

“I have a serious matter to discuss with you. I’m concerned about your spiritual walk with the Lord,” the Pastor states directly.

“Our walk with the Lord?” Judy gasped. “What do you mean?” Pastor Johnson touched both of their shoulders.

“Let’s have a seat and talk about what I am seeing,” he said calmly. As they seated themselves across from his desk, he picked up a report and sat down in his chair. “Your giving has been decreasing over the last few months,” he began. “Is everything okay at home? Are you still liking our church?”

Would the above fictitious conversation shock Tom and Judy? Would it shock you? In our Christian culture, we have established a tradition that pastors should not intrude on people’s finances and giving history. Is that tradition biblical? Does it lead to spiritual growth?

The Apostle Paul, who never backed down from a good controversy, actually discussed a church’s giving with the members. The Corinthian church expressed a desire to be givers, but they were backing down from their self-imposed challenge. Paul wrote, “But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work (giving) also. I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:7-9, NASB).

Paul makes it clear later in this passage that God blesses some believers so they can give to the needs of others (14-

15). Paul knew that giving expresses the inner reality of a transformed life. When a Christian does not give, he is not in synch with the grace of God and other believers. It fosters spiritual growth in the giver and is simply part of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Paul did not hesitate to discuss giving with believers.

We rightly believe that pastors should preach against sin. We esteem our own pastor when he assists families dealing with spousal or child abuse, addictions, and broken marriages. But because of our religious tradition, we don’t view mishandling money and meager giving as a sin. We think that finances are different, so some people are offended when pastors get involved.

You may not like it, but your spiritual growth can be evaluated by how you use your finances (1 Tim 6). Since the above is true, pastors actually help us when they teach about biblical stewardship. Paul established a tradition of ministers talking about giving. We need to follow his example, not the tradition of our culture.

One of the state representatives for the GARBC made an interesting comment to me a few years ago. He discussed the progression of people and local church ministry. He said that when people get interested in a church, they first start attending, then begin serving, and finally start giving. But when they become disillusioned they reverse the process. They first stop giving, then stop serving, and finally stop attending. We openly reflect our spiritual temperament with our finances.

Should pastors discuss your giving with you? If stewardship is a part of discipleship, then the answer is yes. Just as in any sensitive area, wisdom is essential. God sees our finances and giving as a battleground of the soul. Pastors are called by God to help us win that battle. Sometimes, that means we may be uncomfortable. But who ever said that doing the right thing is easy?

BBC Foundation has been ministering to churches and individuals regarding biblical stewardship since 1992. Send your questions on finances and stewardship to: BBC Foundation, 538 Venard Rd., Clarks Summit, PA 18411. Phone: (800) 451-8668, website: bbcfoundation.org; e-mail: info@bbcfoundation.org