

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

BBC FOUNDATION • CLARKS SUMMIT, PA

Wise Financial Stewardship for Churches

Part 1 of 3

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“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (Eph. 5:3 NIV). What does a hint look like? What does a hint smell like or feel like? Among other things, Paul told the church at Ephesus that there must not even be a hint of greed. While this includes having pure motives and actions in relation to money, it also includes the *impression* others have regarding our financial motives and actions. Rumors of financial mismanagement can destroy a lifelong ministry very quickly even if they are false.

Good stewardship demands that sound financial procedures be implemented in churches. Every smart business manager implements procedures that safeguard the financial assets of a company. God’s holy people have an even greater cause: the reputation of Christ. Having sound financial procedures in place is not a way to punish a congregation, treasurer, bookkeeper, board, or pastor, nor is it an expression of mistrust. Financial procedures are a way to protect your congregation and those who handle the church finances from false accusations while safeguarding the resources the Lord has given your church. Over the next two weeks, we will examine some general principles of good financial stewardship.

General Principles of Financial Stewardship

A pivotal principle in financial control is to have different people perform the following duties: (1) bookkeeping, (2) approving payments, and (3) handling money. This allows honest mistakes to be identified quickly and also helps prevent any one individual from having enough power to cover up fraud. As long as you follow this principle, there are multiple ways to set up financial controls for your unique situation. Here are some other important principles:

- Develop a church budget yearly based on what you plan to do the upcoming year. Church leadership should review actual results versus the budget on a monthly basis. Quarterly business meetings should report financial results and also serve to develop confidence that the leadership takes financial stewardship seriously.
- Reconcile bank statements as soon as they are received. Look for unusual items.
- Bond key individuals who have intimate access to the finances. The insurance is inexpensive and is a very standard procedure. Contact your insurance carrier.
- Have a reputable CPA firm do a financial review or audit of the books yearly. This adds much credibility to the financial process.

Ministries gain credibility with current and future members when excellence is pursued. The steps described above are a practical way to gain added financial control. Equally important, a ministry will be able to further remove itself from “any hint of greed.” The benefits are worth the cost. Next week we will examine some specific stewardship procedures for a ministry’s cash receipts and disbursements. If you have specific questions regarding financial stewardship procedures for your ministry, call BBC Foundation. We exist to help individuals and local churches become better stewards of the money God has entrusted to them.

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