

CHRISTIAN MONEY \$ENSE

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Wise Financial Stewardship for Churches (Part 2)

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Last week we discussed some practical implications of Paul's admonition to the Ephesians. "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). Paul says to avoid even the hint of greed. This requires sound financial policies in a church.

Rumors of financial mismanagement can destroy a lifelong ministry very quickly, even if they are false. More importantly, the image of Christ is tarnished when financial mismanagement or scandals occur. 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.

A pivotal principle in financial control is to have different people perform the following duties: (1) bookkeeping, (2) approving payments, and (3) handling money. You can be creative in how you segregate these functions in view of your particular situation. Below are some proven methods related to cash receipts.

Wise Stewardship for Cash Receipts

- Always have two or more people count the offerings immediately after the church service. No one person should ever have access to uncounted cash. The risk is too great for fraud, and an innocent person will have a difficult time proving his or her innocence in the face of a false accusation.
- The money counters should report the offering total on a predetermined form that goes to the bookkeeper. Since the bookkeeper has access to the records, it would be best if he or she did not also have access to the cash. Therefore, the form should not only list the totals of checks and cash but can also list the totals by individual for charitable deduction purposes. Alternatively, some churches use a prenumbered envelope system so the money counters would only

list the envelope number and the amount given on the form. The bookkeeper would then be the only individual who would know both the giver's name and assigned envelope number.

- Regularly switch the pairing of money counters. Avoid a situation where the same counters are always together. This helps prevent the possibility of collusion.
- After the money is counted, it should be placed in a bank bag and locked in a safe for deposit by a third person the next day. Alternatively, some churches deposit money in the bank lock box after each service. This deposit person then gives the bookkeeper the bank deposit slip.
- The bookkeeper now has the form from the money counters listing the total of the offering and the bank deposit slip from a third person. These amounts must be matched as the information is entered into the bookkeeping system.

People in smaller churches might question the viability of segregating duties as described above. I served as a deacon in a smaller church, so I can understand the question. Ministries gain credibility with current and future members when excellence is pursued. The members of our congregations are required to operate under similar controls with their employment. They expect no less from their church. May we always seek the highest road of behavior so Jesus Christ will be praised as we become more like Him. 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