

What Does the Bible Say About Financial Support for Ministers?

To the Church

The Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:14)

God's plan is that those who preach the gospel shall be supported by those receiving it. As Jesus sent out the seventy, they were not to think of themselves as objects of charity. The hospitality of those to whom they ministered was payment for services rendered. He said:

“...stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages.” (Luke 10:7a)

“...let the one who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.” (Gal. 6:6)

Paul taught churches to support those who ministered. According to the New Testament, people who are called to serve a church should receive support from the church. When a church calls a pastor or staff minister, the church has a responsibility to provide for financial needs to the best of the congregation's ability.

In addition to salary and housing, financial support for ministers includes protection benefits (retirement and insurance) and the reimbursement of ministry-related expenses. This should be done with love and Christian generosity.

Spiritual leaders can serve best when they are fully dedicated to the work of the Lord—to the study and teaching of God's Word and ministering to the needs of the body of Christ. If a full-time minister has to work substantial hours at another job to provide for his family, then he will be forced to divide his priorities, leaving less time to adequately shepherd his flock.

To the Minister

1 Timothy 5:8 provides a thought provoking statement:

“...if any one does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”

In the original language there is an added dimension to his words that may not be evident in most translations. When Paul said, “provide for his own,” it included “with forethought for the future.”

Implications of this for a minister's financial support plan should be obvious. Life, disability and medical insurance are important to the wellbeing of one's family. Adequate retirement planning now is essential for one to provide security in retirement years. Appropriate provision for retirement and insurance are a major part of “providing for one's own with forethought for the future.”

While many of these passage may require in depth study and interpretation as it relates to this subject, the following passages are some that will be helpful to anyone wanting to explore the question further: Num. 18:24; Luke 10:7; Acts 4:32-35; Acts 20:33-35; 1 Cor. 9:9-19; 2 Cor. 11:7-9; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:16-19; 1 Tim. 5:8,17-18; 2 Thess. 3:7-10