



# How Should The Local Church Raise Money?

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How should the local church raise money? As you study the practices of many churches, you will notice that there are many different methods that are used to raise money. But, this question is *not* a question about which method raises the most funds. Rather, this is a question about what the Bible authorizes relative to the local church raising funds to accomplish its God-given work. Let's investigate what the Scriptures teach on this matter.

## **The Local Church Needs Money To Accomplish Its Work**

Should the local church even be interested in raising money? Does the local church have a God-authorized use for a collective treasury? Yes it does. And, this answer can be demonstrated by the work that God has given the local church to accomplish.

First, God has given local churches the work of showing benevolence toward needy Christians. Thus, 1 Corinthians 16:1 (which we'll examine more closely later) gives instructions concerning the "collection for the saints." Acts 2:44-45 and Acts 4:32-37 demonstrate the sharing that was accomplished by the members of the first church in Jerusalem. Acts 11:27-30 shows Christians sending relief to their brethren in Judea because of a famine. Romans 15:25-27 speaks of some from the regions of Macedonia and Achaia making "contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem." Similarly, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 speaks further about the "churches of Macedonia" offering financial help to the needy Christians in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 speaks about the need for Christians to share with one another so that those who lack are supplied by their brethren who have an abundance. 1 Timothy 5 provides instructions concerning financial assistance offered by the church to Christian widows. And, Acts 6 shows an example of the local church in Jerusalem addressing the physical needs of their widows.

Second, local churches have been given the work of teaching the gospel. Specifically, you can see a financial element in this work by considering that God has authorized local churches to send financial support to those who were preaching the gospel of Christ. For instance, the local

church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas to preach the gospel in other areas (see Acts 13). The implication is that they provided at least some financial support for this work to be accomplished. Then, in Philippians 4:15-16, there is a direct example of the church in Philippi sending Paul financial help to support him in the work of preaching the gospel. He told the Philippians, “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.”

Third, local churches have the responsibility of edifying those who are saved. Like in the previous point, this also can involve the financial support of an individual who will be dedicated to preaching the gospel. For instance, Paul told the Corinthians, “I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you” (2 Corinthians 11:8). The work of edifying (building up) the saints also involves the assemblies of the local church. Depending upon the circumstances of the congregation, this may involve a financial element that the church is responsible for (i.e. in providing a building to assemble in). And, as part of the edification of the local church, the church is authorized to financially support elders who “rule well” (see 1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Though this is just an overview of the work that God has given to every local church, we have seen that there is clearly a need for money to be raised *somehow*. In this brief description of the work of the local church, I have particularly selected passages and points that bring to mind the need for financial contributions. But, the question of how the local church should raise this money has not yet been solved.

### **How Local Churches Raised Money In The New Testament**

Fortunately, God has not left us without an answer as to how local churches in the New Testament were authorized to raise money. We must simply be focused on doing all things according to the pattern God has revealed in the pages of the New Testament (2 Timothy 1:13). Colossians 3:17 says, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

So, what is the authority God gives in the New Testament concerning the way local churches should raise money? If God had not given any instructions on this matter, local churches would be authorized to raise money in whatever way they believed would be best (under generic authority). However, God has *specified* only one means for the local church to raise money. This specific authority is found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.”

Now, let's consider the various things that are stated in this passage to more fully understand the authority that is being given. First, there was to be a collection taken up by the local church in Corinth. The church in Corinth was to be involved in gathering funds so that Paul would not have to collect money whenever he would come. This fact, coupled with the element of the first day of the week, indicates that there is authority for a local church to have a collective treasury and that money must be collected for that treasury. This concept of a collection can also be seen in some of the passages we have already considered. And, notice that this collection is said to be something that "must" be done.

Second, this collection was not limited to the local church in Corinth. This authority was not limited to one church for very specific circumstances. Rather, these same instructions had also been given to the local churches in the Galatian region. Although God could have chosen any number of ways for local churches to raise money, He has only consistently authorized this kind of collection.

Third, this collection was for the purpose of accomplishing a God-given work. God never authorized the local church to collect money just for the church to be wealthy and to take from its members. The authority that is given in 1 Corinthians 16 (and that was also given to the churches of Galatia) was directly related to the God-given work they were to be accomplishing. Particularly, this passage speaks of the work of benevolence toward the needy saints in Jerusalem. In addition, there is absolutely no authority that is given by this passage for the local church to collect funds so that it can accomplish a work that God has never given it to accomplish! This contribution is *only* to be used for the work God has given the local church to accomplish.

Fourth, this collection was to be taken up on the first day of the week. In this specific authority that is given for this collection, there is also specific instructions concerning when this collection was to be taken up. It was to be accomplished on the first day of the week. This would have certainly been an opportune time for Christians in the first century who were coming together to partake of the Lord's Supper on this same day (see Acts 20:7). And, it continues to be an opportune time for local churches to collect these funds today. But, this is not just an opportune time for the collection. It is the only time God has authorized for the collection. Because God has only specified this time, no other time is permissible for a local church to take up a collection. Furthermore, the local church is authorized to take up such a collection as often as there is a first day of the week (i.e. every week), if it is necessary for the work of the church.

Fifth, this collection was a free-will offering of the members of the local church. The local church is not authorized to force anyone to contribute nor is it authorized to mandate a certain amount to be contributed by the members. But, every member of the local church should willingly be involved in this collection. Paul instructed that "each one" of the members "lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper." So, this is a responsibility given to every member of the local church. And, the amount each member is expected to give directly corresponds to the amount

he/she has been prospered. Therefore, if an individual prospers more, he/she should give more. But, if an individual prospers less, he/she may give less.

Notice, however, that God has not bound a specific amount for an individual to contribute (i.e. a tithe). Instead, He has left it to the individual Christian to decide within himself/herself what the appropriate amount should be. That said, there are some guidelines that individual Christians ought to consider. For instance, as we have already considered, the amount of the contribution directly correlates with the amount of prosperity. And, 2 Corinthians 8-9 also provides some helpful information concerning the attitudes involved in this contribution. This includes that the Christian should remember how much God gave to him/her in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that God accepts what an individual has, that those who contribute sparingly will also reap sparingly, and that God loves a cheerful giver.

### **Examining Common Church Fundraisers**

We have now investigated the specific authority God has given concerning the way local churches should raise money. Now, using this information, we should take a moment to examine how many churches actually attempt to raise money. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 instructs that we “Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” So, we should consistently be in the habit of examining everything that we are involved in by the pattern God has revealed in the New Testament to see whether we are holding fast to that pattern or not (2 Timothy 1:13). We must abstain (get away from) those things that are not according to the pattern and we must hold fast (cling) to those things that are according to the pattern.

Unfortunately, many churches are engaged in unauthorized fundraising activities. Some take up collections on days other than the first day of the week, some require their members to give a certain percentage of their income, some have bake sales, some have rummage sales, some will ask for donations from the community by standing outside of stores, some will have benefit dinners, some will put on theatrical events or run athletic leagues, some will sell physical things, some will operate daycares and schools, etc. to raise money. But, all of these are completely unauthorized by God!

### **Conclusion**

There is only one-way God has authorized for a local church to raise money. That is by a free-will offering from its members on the first day of the week. If any local church pursues a different means of raising money, it does so without Bible authority! Let us always be dedicated to doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17)!

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