

“Money!”

Now that I have your attention...

I want to offer, in the first column of 2012, a few pieces of observation, advice, and counsel. If anyone has difficulty with perceptions, please allow me to “take off my Superintendent’s hat” (this column is not self-serving) and speak as a brother in Christ, an elder in the Lord’s work ... about money.

Jesus spoke frequently about money. It’s not a subject to be avoided. We talk frequently about money. I would urge us all to also pray about money, and speak/teach/instruct regarding the true biblical perspective of stewardship and our relationship to God.

If the Apostle could come to the end of his journey and evaluate by saying, “We have not failed to declare to you the whole counsel of God ...” then that should also be said of each of us. Biblical foundations regarding money are a part of that.

Here are a few observations for my fellow Assemblies of God ministers:

The Tithe is Holy to the Lord

I love to hear a pastor or worship leader use phrasing like, “We will continue in our worship to God, as we return the Lord’s tithe, and give our offerings to His Work,” or something similar. To “take” an offering robs us of spiritual dynamic.

In today’s world, one of the crying needs (as I see it) is to return/revive/renew the solid teaching within our churches that “the tithe is the Lord’s.” To contribute to a church’s budget makes one a consumer (which allows them to ask, “What am I getting in return?”) To return the Lord’s tithe makes one a worshipper, placing a whole different dynamic on it. Pastor, review your preaching history. How long has it been since you taught on stewardship or spoke on the biblical truths of tithing, giving, AND having the spirit of generosity?

It is (all too) frequent that I hear (from both ministers and lay leaders) the “sensitivity” of not wanting to offend, thus avoiding any teaching on biblical stewardship. If there is room in our preaching schedule for biblical teaching on human sexuality (and there should be), how much more should there be solid, biblical teaching on the tithe and on stewardship principles?

Missions is not optional equipment

With all the (correct) emphasis on The Healthy Church, we must include the truth that a healthy church is not inward focused. The mandate for global evangelization came first from the Head of this Church, and has not been revoked! “Pray!” “Give!” “Send!” and “Go!” are operative words in our journey. I pray it will be passionate among our leaders.

Consider:

- No church ever “loses” by generously investing in missions.
- Our people will give to missions, when given the challenge and opportunity.
- As a pastor/leader, I have responsibility to expose my congregation to this call and command.
- When children (and often teens) are absent from our main worship services, then they miss the impact of God’s call to “give” or even “go.” Creative efforts should be made to provide for such.

- Whatever plan/approach one uses to the missions budget, the career missionary should be the foundation stone of our support. If we believe in the indigenous-church principle, then “commit to faithful men, who will teach others also” is central to raising up a strong national church.

"Example" is a part of "Authenticity"

The Pharisees loved to parade their giving. We don't need that visibility.

However, should a pastor/teacher not be a tither and a giver (personally), it will eventually show in the fruit of one's ministry.

I observe that often, pastors are “generous” with their church's mission budget, but not their own resources, when it comes to missions and special appeals.

Let's address the real issues

- *Matt 13:22* The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

- *1 John 2:16* (NIV) For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

- *1 John 2:16* (The Message) Practically everything that goes on in the world—wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him.

For sure, even the subject of “MONEY” is more an issue of the heart than anything else.

I want that your “whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Thessalonians 5:23). May that be true in every aspect of personal and corporate stewardship.

I pray that the ministry you serve will be healthy, fruitful, and solidly anchored in His Word.

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