

# Financial Support for Christian Leaders

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## Introduction

Just looking into the limits of financial support for church leaders risks stepping on a path where even well-mannered Christians are snubbed as the worst kind of troublemakers. Even in our culture where almost nothing is too pure to escape being stripped and splayed for proof of value, there are still sacred cows the church avoids questioning. Vocational church leadership is one of them. That's a bold assertion at the outset, but quite justified considering the pulsing predicament at the heart of our inquiry.

The Judeo-Christian model of leadership exposes a staggering conflict of interest touching pastors and their present standards of support. Spiritual leaders are principally esteemed and appointed based on their aptitude to teach or interpret God's law with knowledge to those under them.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the teachers with whom we must consult to know about God's standard of support for leaders happen to be the exact same subjects of the inquiry; and, in most cases, what they say directly benefits them. The conflict is self-evident. This alone doesn't mean their view is wrong, but at a minimum the weight of their opinion should be challenged for cause in the same way civil judges dismiss jurors for relevant biases. It's worth noting that similar conflicts of interest are present among relatives and dependents of church leaders, or anyone else closely acquainted with them. Some of these may vocalize disapproval for the "megachurch" varieties in an attempt to counterbalance their crushing bias; still, virtually no shade is thrown on predominant middle class

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<sup>1</sup> See Gen. 18:19 (Abraham); Acts 7:22 (Moses); Luke 2:46-47 (Jesus); and 1 Tim. 3:2 (overseers).

ones. What if the millionaire leaders at the top appealed to the same biblical defense as the comparatively modest ones below? How hypocritical is it to judge according to scale, but not on standard? At what dollar level should Christians cry foul—and on what grounds?

Critical scholarship seems disinterested to expose this issue or press on these questions. Maybe it stems from the idea that orthodoxy is accumulated over time, making any critique of modern practices futile. Or maybe watching entrenched norms placed under the microscope is too unsettling—for what else might need to go under? Worse yet, it could reflect an unsavory bias among booksellers who depend on these monied spaces to promote their merchandise. Fortunately, at least some argumentative support exists for the present standard. Scholarly advocates generally lump together the work of a pastor with the work Paul wrote about in 1 Cor. 9 in order to make apostleship equivalent to leading a church. Pair that with basic affirmations of pastoral provision found in Gal. 6:6 and 1 Tim. 5:17 and the case seems solid at first glance. However, when faced with the lightest scrutiny, arguments usually devolve into unsubstantiated assurances that paid pastors were the epitome of New Testament intent. This paper will work through these arguments and give this topic the scrutiny it deserves.

To avoid burying the lede, let it be known up front that despite the proliferation of salaried, professional church leaders, these represent serious deviations from the New Testament standard. Full-time financial support of basic needs are only reserved for leaders traveling in a missionary capacity; otherwise, pastors are only eligible to receive a special distribution from the fellowship of believers to supplement their normal working income when legitimate needs arise. If conforming to the biblically supplied standard is important, current deviations must be corrected. That said, bearing up the needs of the church family is as vital as ever, especially after so much misappropriation from leadership endured over the centuries. This should deter casual readers from bailing prematurely, assuming what follows is a rejection of any support for church leaders, which would be an odd sight on the Christian stage known by its charity. As such, primary debate

lies not between affirming and negating sides, but between two models clashing in the amount of support pastors are biblically entitled to receive.

Before moving into the main sections of this paper dealing with the relevant scriptures, it may be helpful to insist Christians elevate their regard for this topic. Not only does it deal with the notoriously sensitive issue of money and its tendency to distract us from God (Matt. 6:24; Mark 4:19); but it affects collective behavior. What Christians choose to affirm and practice on this front directly impacts our social fabric, including our high-stakes responsibility to care for the poor (Matt. 25:30–46) and to prioritize the word of God over worldly ambition. While some doctrines deal strictly in the domain of theological ideas, others explore the field of communal ethics. This paper deals in both, but finds its strongest footing in the latter.

## Highest Ministry Examined

In determining how much financial support should be provided to local church leaders, we must first understand how Jesus was supported as the preeminent leader of the church. This is not to say all leadership roles should be modeled after Jesus' with a one to one correspondence, only that by examining his own we may ascertain key constraints binding on all, regardless of rank or duty. Accounting for the early church practices starts with understanding its foundation which was established by Christ and the apostles.

In Jesus' role (and ultimately reflected in the apostles) the priority of leadership was to proclaim and authenticate the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit throughout an entirely unchurched world. We can see this reflected in the way Paul described the various callings and gifts of leadership after Jesus' ascension.

**Ephesians 4:7** But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. **8** Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men... **11** And **he gave some, apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors** and **teachers**; **12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...** (King James Version)

Nearly two thousand years later, our view of leadership is more one-dimensionally confined. Christians today might cite a senior pastor as their highest perceived role. But in the initial salvo of the great commission to preach the gospel, teach Jesus' commandments, and baptize the repentant (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47-48), the most prominent leaders were occupied with traveling in a missionary capacity to make disciples. Notice the role of a pastor is listed last after all of these (Eph 4:11). Jesus certainly exemplifies all of them and is called by nearly all their titles; "Apostle" (Heb. 3:1), "Prophet" (Acts 3:22), "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4), and "Good Teacher" (Luke 18:18). However, he spent most of his time on the move, modeling apostleship for his disciples to fulfill in his absence. This is the setting wherein we have the most scriptural information to study in terms of financial support for a leader. But again, just because a pastor does not travel or execute the role of an apostle, doesn't mean he is altogether free from any other constraints inherent to the model. Peter and Paul both seemed to have had agreement on this.

**1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.**

**1 Peter 2:20** ...but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. **21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps...**

**Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God...**

For example, it seems strange that a local pastor would be eligible to receive so much more material and financial support than Jesus ever did as the chief evangelist and equipper of the apostles. And yet, many pastors are receiving far greater standards of living in their roles. How can this be reconciled if leaders are to pattern their lives after his own? As we'll see, the standard of living Jesus had never rose above a subsistence level in terms of what he accepted in the form of outside support. This is an important consideration.

**Luke 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.**

**Matthew 20:26 Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.**

Fortunately, we are not left to make up our own rules for the differences in these offices of leadership. New Testament epistles and pastoral letters, particularly those of Paul, provide the most detailed instruction on how leaders were to be supported. While a pastor's role differs significantly compared to traveling ministers, this paper still contends that Jesus' model helps order and constrain every office taught in the Bible.

Before committing to a life of ordained service to God, Jesus lived and worked in the world like any man, as a builder in his case (Mark 6:3). At about 30 years old, he left working to travel throughout Israel preaching the gospel and ministering.

**Matthew 4:17** From that time **Jesus began to preach**, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand... **23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing** all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

**Mark 10:1** **And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan:** and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, **he taught them** again.

We observe right away that Jesus' model of financial support related to his extensive traveling to teach, evangelize, and heal. His ministry spanned two to three years, and none of the accounts placed Jesus anywhere long enough to establish long-term residence or occupation. Scripture confirms this condition and explains how some of his most basic needs were provided.

**Luke 9:57** ...as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee withersoever thou goest. **58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.**

**Luke 10:38** Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha **received him in her house.**

**Luke 19:5** And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, **Zacchaeus**, make haste, and come down; for to day **I must abide at thy house...** **7** And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That **he was gone to be guest** with a man that is a sinner.

These clarify that Jesus benefited from the hospitality of room and board provided to him as a guest in certain households. However, to build an exhaustive model of support it must be asked: did Jesus ever receive direct compensation for this ministry? In other words, was Jesus ever paid

wages for spiritual work, to save and to spend like workers commonly do? The answer is no. But as we can read, this was an important parameter of the ministry being modeled.

**Matthew 10:7** And as ye go, **preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.** **8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.**

Even though this reads straightforwardly, let's unpack it fully. Considering that Jesus accepted hospitality and basic provisions from others (Matt. 10:11) there must be a distinction between these things and another payment the apostles were instructed not to take in verse 8. What was being given? Jesus said they would give others that which they had already received themselves. Let's summarize what the apostles had received from Jesus' ministry. First, they received teaching claimed to have originated from the Father.

**Luke 2:42** And **when he was twelve years old**, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast... **46** And it came to pass, that after three days **they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.** **47** And **all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.** **48** ...his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. **49** And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? **wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?**

**Matthew 4:22** And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. **23** And Jesus went about all Galilee, **teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all manner of sickness...

**Matthew 5:1** And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, **his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught...**

**John 1:1** In the beginning was **the Word**, and **the Word was with God**, and **the Word was God...** **14 And the Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us...**full of grace and truth...** **17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.**

**John 3:1** There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: **2 The same... said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.**

**John 6:66** From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. **67** Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? **68** Then Simon **Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.** **69** And we believe and are sure that **thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.**

The early accounts of Jesus calling his disciples give absolutely no indication they were required to pay him directly or indirectly in exchange for his teaching. Instead, descriptions of

Jesus' ministry emphasize its public nature and a habit of suffering crowds in open places who gathered to hear. Even when arrested, Jesus testified that his teaching was kept readily available.

**John 18:19** The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. **20** Jesus answered him, **I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.**

A profound connection is made between Jesus' teachings and symbolic language from the Old Testament prophets describing the word of God going out into the world to those who hunger and thirst for it. These symbols include such things as bread, wine, milk and water, which nourish and extend the mortal life of the consumer. The emphasis from Isaiah is on the generous giving of these things (in forms suggesting an eternal quality) to those who cannot afford to buy them if they were to be sold.

**Isaiah 55:1** Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. **2** Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? **Hearken (H8085) diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good...** **3** **Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear,** and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David... **10** For **as the rain cometh down, and... watereth the earth,** and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: **11** **So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:** it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

- **H8085** - sha'ama', *shaw-mah'* **to hear intelligently, X discern, give ear,** (cause to, let, make to) **hear** (-ken, tell), X indeed, **listen,** make (a) noise, (be) obedient, obey, **perceive,** (make a) proclaim (-ation),

The links are easily made between the gospels' portrayal of Jesus and his own testimony that he was the fulfillment of these symbols (John 5:39) saying "it is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Jesus called the tired and thirsty to "come unto me" (John 7:37, Matt. 11:28) and referred to himself as the "bread of life" (John 6:27-35) and "living water" (John 4:10-14). When talking with the woman at the well in Samaria, Jesus classified this living water as "the gift of God," and as something to be "given."

**John 4:7** There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. 8 (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) 9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. 10 Jesus answered and said unto her, **If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given (G1325) thee living water.**

■ **G1325** - didōmi, *did'-o-mee* A prolonged form of a primary verb; **to give**, adventure, **bestow**, bring forth, **commit**, deliver (up), **grant**, hinder, make, minister, number, offer, have power, put, receive, set, shew

Notice the grammatical similarity between this statement to the woman and his command to the apostles with regard to giving.

**Matthew 10:7** And as ye go, **preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.** 8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: **freely ye have received, freely give (G1325).**

The primary gift of God is the message which came by Jesus Christ, but there is another gift in tandem with his words—miracles. Spiritual power is so entwined with the word of God as a means of validating its origin, that to overstate the differences is to miss the fact that they are both indeed the gift of God, and mutually dependent. We see this in Matthew 10 as the twelve were sent out: Jesus gave them power (to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils) as they went about delivering his message. The dual gift of knowledge and power is unmistakable in the forty days after Jesus' resurrection, and thereafter at Pentecost. The forty days served as the capstone of his teaching to the apostles, illuminating prophecy pertaining to himself and the kingdom (Luke 24:27, Acts 1:1-3) as they waited on the "gift of the Holy Ghost" that Peter and the others received in the upper room. That power manifested initially through the speaking of tongues (Acts 1:4-8; 2:4) and later in bold teaching (Acts 4:31), healing the lame (Acts 3:6-7), and raising a dead woman to life (Acts 9:40). The purpose of the gift of miracles was always to confirm the words of Jesus, and by extension, the words of the Father.

**John 10:24** Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? **If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.** 25 Jesus answered them, **I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me...** 30 I and my Father are one. 31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, **Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?** 33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone



thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God... 36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? 37 **If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.** 38 **But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.**

**John 14:21** He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him... 24 **...and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.** 25 **These things have I spoken unto you,** being yet present with you. 26 **But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.**

**Mark 16:19** So then **after the Lord had spoken unto them,** he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 **And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following...**

Hence, the gift of miracles authenticated Jesus' words as having originated with the Father, and the Holy Spirit himself was sent to teach and bring into remembrance all things pertaining to Jesus' words when he was present with his disciples. We have the gift of the word of God brought by Jesus (knowledge) and the gift of miracles through the Spirit (power), but both are of the Father.

One way we know the exchange of money for these gifts is a definite evil Jesus wished to prevent (by the saying, "freely ye have received, freely give") is through Peter's confrontation with Simon Magnus during a period of church growth in Samaria. After an initial work of evangelism by Philip in the vicinity, many believed and were baptized having heard the message of Jesus and seen certain miracles, but they did not receive power themselves.

**Acts 8:9** But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city **used sorcery** (G3096), and **bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:** 10 **To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.** 11 And to him they had regard, because **that of long time he had bewitched** (G1839) **them with sorceries** (G3095). 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and **wondered** (G1839), **beholding the miracles** and signs which were done. 14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had **received the word of God,** they sent unto them Peter and John: 15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, **that they might receive the Holy Ghost:** 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

- G3096 - mageuō, *mag-yoo'-o* From G3097; to practice magic: use sorcery.

- **G3097** - magos, *mag'-os* From foreign origin [H7248]; a Magian, that is, **Oriental scientist**; by **implication a magician**: - **sorcerer**, wise man.
- **G3095** - mageia, *mag-i'-ah* From G3096; "magic": - sorcery.
- **G1839** - existēmi, *ex-is'-tay-mee* From G1537 and G2476; to put (stand) out of wits, that is, **astound**, or (reflexively) become astounded, insane: - **amaze**, be (**make**) **astonished**, be beside self (selves), bewitch, **wonder**.

Acts 8 records the incredible upending of this famous sorcerer. Simon was accustomed to amazing others by his magic, but even he was bowled over by the miracles done by Philip through the Holy Spirit. It's not important whether Simon's feats in Samaria were natural in origin or supernaturally influenced by a spirit. However, it's worth noting that his form of sorcery appears to have been different from other "sorceries" translated in the Bible, such as Rev. 9:21 and pharmakeia (G5331) which grammatically implies the use of hallucinogens. Simon's trade seems to have focused on feats of magic which amaze onlookers, similar to the Egyptian magicians who went toe-to-toe with Moses (Exo. 8:7, 18–19). As they faltered and admitted defeat at the third plague, so too did Simon ultimately concede to the power of the Holy Spirit in Christians.

Many terms are used for these cunning arts aimed to deceive people, or to facilitate interaction with spirits apart from God. Moses categorized them all as abominations. The grouping seems reasonable considering their overlapping and correlated definitions.

**Deuteronomy 18:9** When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, **thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.** 10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that **useth (H7080) divination**, or an **observer of times (H6049)**, or an **enchanter (H5172)**, or a **witch (H3784)**, 11 Or a **charmer (H2266)**, or a **consulter with familiar spirits**, or a **wizard (H3049)**, or a **necromancer**. 12 **For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD:** and **because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out** from before thee. 13 Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. 14 For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto **observers of times (H6049)**, and unto **diviners (H7080)**: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

- **H7080** - qāsam, *kaw-sam'* A primitive root; properly to distribute, that is, **determine by lot or magical scroll**; by implication **to divine**: - divine (-r, -ation), prudent, **soothsayer**, use [divination].
- **H6049** - 'ānan, *aw-nan'* A primitive root; to cover; used only as denominative from H6051, **to cloud over**; figuratively to **act covertly**, that is, **practise magic**: -X bring, **enchanter**, Meonemin, observe (-r of) times, **soothsayer**, **sorcerer**.

- **H5172** - nâchash, *naw-khash'*A primitive root; properly to hiss, that is, **whisper a (magic) spell**; generally to prognosticate: - X certainly, **divine**, enchanter, (use) X **enchantment, learn by experience**, X indeed, diligently observe.
- **H3784** - kâshaph, *kaw-shaf'*A primitive root; properly to **whisper a spell**, that is, **to inchant or practise magic**: - **sorcerer**, (use) witch (-craft).
- **H2266** - chaḇar, *khaw-bar'*A primitive root; **to join** (literally or figuratively); **specifically (by means of spells) to fascinate**: - charm (-er), be compact, couple (together), have fellowship with, heap up, join (self, together), league.
- **H3049** - yidde'ônîy, *yd-deh-o-nee'*From H3045; properly **a knowing one**; specifically **a conjurer**; (by implication) a ghost: - wizard.

In general, history insinuates the practitioners of these arts were paid professionals. The Bible provides good evidence for this. Among them include diviners with familiar spirits, the same type Paul encountered in Philippi, who brought great financial gain to investors.

**Acts 16:16** And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, **a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain (G2039) by soothsaying**: 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. 18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. 19 And when **her masters saw that the hope of their gains (G2039) was gone**, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers...

- **G2039** - ergasia, *er-gas-ee'-ah* From G2040; **occupation; by implication profit**, pains: - craft, diligence, gain, work.

We see another scriptural example of wages paid to people who practice the works described in Deuteronomy 18 in the account of Balak attempting to garner the assistance of one of God's prophets in the region named Balaam during the period of exodus.

**Numbers 22:3** And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and **Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel**. 4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And **Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites** at that time. 5 **He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam** the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, **to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me**: 6 **Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me**: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed. 7 **And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination (H7081) in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak...** 15 And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. 16 And they came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, **Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming** unto me: 17 **For I will**

promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: **come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.** 18 And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, **If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD** my God, to do less or more.

- **H7081** - qesem, *keh'-sem* From H7080; a lot; also divination (including its fee), oracle: - (reward of) divination, divine sentence, witchcraft.

These examples in Acts 16 and Numbers 22 prove there was indeed money to be earned in these abominable trades categorized in Deuteronomy 18. This is relevant as we come to the second half of Simon's account involving Peter. Peter and John were sent to Samaria because new believers had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit themselves after the evangelism of Philip.

**Acts 8:17** Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given (G1325), he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. 21 **Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.** 22 **Repent therefore of this thy wickedness**, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 **For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.** 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. 25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

Peter roundly condemns Simon's desire to transact the impartation of spiritual gifts. It's safe to assume Simon was accustomed to profiting off the "least and greatest" (Acts 8:10) who gave heed to his craft. It's no stretch to think Simon intended to profit from selling this power into a market he clearly understood. It's very likely he saw the fortune one could make.

The text says Simon desired to buy the means of distributing the Holy Spirit's power. But this we know is intrinsically linked with the knowledge of Christ, which taken together comprises the gift of God. Peter slams the buying and selling of the gift of God as a wickedness—"because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money... repent therefore of this thy wickedness"). Consequently, we can be sure anyone who presumes to buy and sell the word of God (with or without the supporting power) is at least as profligate as Simon. Maybe worse—for which gift is greater from God? the word "without price" (Isa. 55:1) or the miracles which

authenticate it? Considering Peter's ample time spent with Jesus, we can reasonably trace the condemnation of Simon back to Jesus' command that leaders give freely just as they had received.

Apart from our confidence that Jesus did not accept payment for his ministry teaching and performing miracles, the gospels nevertheless suggest money supported them on occasion. The solution to this apparent conflict is explained by the bedrock of Christian fellowship modeled in apostles and their teacher. Without a full-fledged understanding of Christian fellowship, phrases like "financial support" and "making money" seem like distinctions without any difference.<sup>2</sup> We will expound this solution after presenting the scriptures indicating the means they had to buy things and give alms.

**John 6:5** When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? **6** And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. **7** Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

**John 12:3** Then took **Mary** a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of **Jesus**, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. **4** Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, **5** Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? **6** This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag (G1101), and bare what was put therein.

**John 13:27** And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. **28** Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. **29** For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag (G1101), that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

- **G1101** - glössokomon, *gloce-sok'-om-on* From G1100 and the base of G2889; properly a **case** (to keep mouthpieces of wind instruments in), that is, (by extension) a casket or (specifically) **purse**: - bag. Thayer's Greek Lexicon: "a case in which to keep the mouth-pieces of wind instruments; a small box for other uses also; especially a casket, **purse to keep money.**"

Jesus and the apostles carried a collective purse (or money bag) from which they procured necessities or gave to the poor. Keep in mind that Jesus and the apostles left home to preach and minister for free and, as a result, suffered economic disadvantages (see 2 Cor. 8:9 and Matt. 19:27).

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<sup>2</sup> See "Christian Fellowship as Joint Equity" (christianpapers.net) for a detailed explanation and defense of Christian Fellowship.

The scriptures do not tell exactly how much they carried. In John 6, it's possible Philip quoted their current balance when he surmised that 200 silver denarii would barely feed the crowd. Or it could represent a completely out-of-reach figure to highlight the absurdity of Jesus' prompt to go to the market. Either way, the shock implied wasn't the notion of buying something with money, but the size of the crowd. Judas' disapproval of not adding the value of the perfume to their purse in John 12 suggests this might have been a common practice. He was not condemned for that idea, but for his thieving disposition. Finally, in John 13 we have a clean summary of the purse's two main outflows: (1) their own basic provisions (for a feast, in this case), and (2) alms.

How their purse was funded is a little more theoretical based on the limited descriptions of inflows found in the gospels (compared to the outflows already noted). The simplest theory might come from Luke's account of thousands of Christian converts organizing under the leadership of the apostles.

**Acts 2:38** Then Peter said unto them, **Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. **41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized:** and the same day there were added unto them **about three thousand souls.** **42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship (G2842),** and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. **43** And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. **44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common (G2839); 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted (G1266) them to all men, as every man had need.** **46** And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart...

- **G2842** - koinōnia, *koy-nohn-ee'-ah* From G2844; **partnership**, that is, (literally) **participation**, or (social) intercourse, or (**pecuniary**) **benefaction**: - (to) communicate (-ation), communion, (contri-), **distribution**, fellowship.

- **G2839** - koinos, *koy-nos'* Probably from G4862; common, **that is, (literally) shared by all or several.**

- **G1266** - diamerizō, *dee-am-er-id'-zo* From G1223 and G3307; **to partition thoroughly (literally in distribution, figuratively in dissension):** - cloven, **divide**, part.

Acts 4-6 details how the apostles redirected money laid at their feet to the poor in the church (including widows), and the assignment of deacons to carry on this administration. A main feature described in these passages is the votive (or voluntary) nature of giving. This is expressed clearly in Peter's response to the incident involving Ananias and Sapphira. But the most relevant part comes

from Acts 2:42 where the believers are said to have adopted not just the doctrine of the apostles, but their fellowship. The Greek term *koinōnia* behind fellowship describes the sharing of resources like a partnership, a term New Testament writers later use to describe the giving and receiving enjoyed by brothers and sisters in Christ among churches. Therefore, it stands to reason that whatever the converts did in response to the gospel with their possession mirrored the apostolic ministry itself. By looking at the funding of the communities described in Acts 2-6, we can better understand how the purse held by Judas was funded.

The author of Acts explained that the money given to care for the poor came from possessions sold by believers who feared God and believed the witness. By this standard, all of the money in the purse carried by the apostles could have been supplied by their own voluntary contributions at the start of their fellowship, or from others who revered Jesus and wanted to help with any needs as they traveled. The ministering women in Luke 8 are possible examples of this.

**Luke 8:1** And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: **and the twelve were with him, 2 And certain women**, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, 3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, **and many others, which ministered (G1247) unto him of their substance (G5224).**

■ **G5224** - *huparchonta*, *hoop-ar'-khon-tah* Neuter plural of present participle active of G5225 as noun; things extant or in hand, that is, **property or possessions**: - goods, that which one has, **things which (one) possesseth, substance**, that hast.

■ **G1247** - *diakoneō*, *dee-ak-on-eh'-o* From G1249; to be an attendant, that is, **wait upon** (mentally or as a **host**, friend or [figuratively] teacher); **technically to act as a Christian deacon**: - (ad-) **minister** (unto), serve, use the office of a deacon.

Jesus and the twelve were clearly helped by these women who gave from their wealth. Luke 8 could just be describing lodging and meals. But it's also possible they funded future legitimate needs Jesus and his followers would incur while traveling. The women might have inspired the legendary acts of fellowship we see reported from Luke in Acts 2-4.

So far, the examination of financial and material support for Jesus and his ministry yields the following characteristics.

1. Jesus' primary support relieved basic needs (typically room and board as a short-term guest) incurred while traveling.
2. Jesus did not accept payment for spiritual work (nor did the apostles).
3. Whatever financial support Jesus enjoyed was held communally as an early form of fellowship and spent on alms or eating together in worship.

To think Jesus' manner and lifestyle was too drastic wouldn't be novel, even factoring for his fame. His own friends thought similarly during the initial parts of his ministry.

**Mark 3:21** And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for **they said, He is beside himself.**

The reaction might be natural, but the fact remains that Jesus went to extreme lengths to give the very best of himself, at the least cost, to the most people. Jesus' death is not the only stunning thing about him, his standard of living as a church leader is starkly contrasted to church leaders we know today.

## Needs-Based Model

Now we can move on from the living example of Jesus' ministry to study his sayings and commandments on the topic. As expected, Jesus preached what he practiced. Some of it spoke directly to the disciples in terms of support they could accept while traveling to preach. But Jesus also warned them more broadly about money and its relationship to godliness and faith.

**Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth**, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: **20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: **21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also...** **24 No man can serve two masters:** for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon (G3126).** **25** Therefore I say unto you, **Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.** Is not the life more than **meat**, and the body than **raiment?** **26 Behold the fowls of the air:** for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?... **28 And why take ye thought for raiment?** Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: **29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.** **30 Wherefore, if God so clothe**



the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

- **G3126** - *mammōnas, mam-mo-nas* 'Of Chaldee origin (confidence, that is, figuratively **wealth, personified**); *mammonas*, that is, avarice (deified): - mammon.

Consider these sayings in the context of the twelve who had forsaken everything to follow Jesus, as Peter declared in Matt. 19:27. They have been instructive to many people since his death and resurrection, but at a minimum we know they tended to the pressing concerns of his closest followers. In Peter's case specifically, we can draw a connection to the possessions of the rich man in Matt. 19:16 and the nets Peter left to follow Jesus.

**Matthew 4:20** And they straightway **left (G863)** their nets, and followed him.

**Matthew 19:24** And again I say unto you, **It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.** 25 When his disciples heard it, **they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?...** 27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, **we have forsaken (G863) all,** and followed thee...

- **G863** - *aphiēmi, af-ee'-ay-mee* From G575; to send forth, in various applications: - cry, forgive, **forsake, lay aside, leave**, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, **remit**, suffer, **yield up**.

Peter developed needs as an apostle because traveling to preach the gospel restricted his ability to earn money like he was previously accustomed. Jesus validated only food ("what shall we eat"), drink ("what shall we drink"), and clothing ("wherewithal shall we be clothed"). These he cited as legitimate, referring to them as elements even the Father knows and will grant so long as the kingdom is prioritized. Moreover, in the context of training successors, Jesus thoroughly discouraged the accumulation of great wealth. Note the relationship between the needs ministers worry about and faith: "shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Consequently, we should expect to see ministers depicting exceptional levels of trust that God will provide for them

uniquely and in ways that are much different than how the rest of the world goes about taking care of needs (Matt. 6:32).

Finally, let's examine the specific instructions about support Jesus gave to the apostles on the verge of fulfilling their namesake ("apostle" means a delegated messenger or sent one).

**Matthew 10:1** And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease... **5 These twelve Jesus sent forth**, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: **6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** **7 And as ye go, preach**, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. **8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.** **9 Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,** **10 Nor scrip (G4082) for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat (G5160).** **11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.** **12 And when ye come into an house,** salute it. **13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.** **14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.** **15 Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.**

- **G4082** - pēra, *pay'-rah* Of uncertain affinity; a wallet or leather **pouch for food**: - scrip.
- **G5160** - trophē, *trof-ay'* From G5142; **nourishment** (literally or figuratively); by implication rations (wages): - **food, meat**.

**Mark 6:7** And he called unto him the twelve, and **began to send them forth** by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; **8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse:** **9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats.** **10** And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place...

**Luke 9:1** Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. **2 And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.** **3** And he said unto them, **Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.** **4 And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.**

**Luke 10:1** After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. **2** Therefore said he unto them, **The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few:** pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. **3** Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. **4 Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes:** and salute no man by the way. **5 And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.** **6** And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. **7 And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire.** Go not from house to house.

These passages comprehensively describe the sending forth of the apostles and the seventy. First, we need to identify their approved forms of financial support; second, determine how they compare with Jesus' own example; and third, clarify the first mention of "a labourer is worthy of his meat, or hire" which will be important later.

The apostles could not take money or spare items such as shoes, clothing, or food. These needs were implicitly and explicitly provided by the worthy households wherein they stayed. Notice here the connection between the items they were not permitted to carry, and the needs Jesus addressed beforehand, namely food, drink, and clothing. Not surprisingly, Jesus' own example conforms perfectly with his instructions. Note that at the end of his life Jesus' net worth amounted to what he wore, which was divvied up among the soldiers at his execution (Matt. 27:35), corroborating Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

As for the parallel sayings in Luke 10:7 and Matt. 10:10, these will be picked up again when we examine Paul's instruction on supporting Christian leaders and "the labourer is worthy of his reward." But in the original context here, we need to ask the following questions. Who is the "labourer?" What is the "labour"? And what, specifically, is the "reward"? The labourer represents the servant appointed and sent by Jesus into a broad region for the "harvest." The labour is the traveling, public preaching, and healing. And the reward is the gift of food, drink, and a bed in which to sleep from worthy households. Technically, in Matt. 10:10 the word "meat" (rendered in the other verses as "hire" or "reward") is *trophē trof-ay'* from Strong's G5160 which means nourishment, or food.

Some may inquire, since sandals or tunics are not mentioned, whether articles of clothing were provisioned, too. We can assume they were, considering "shoes" are mentioned when Jesus recalls their journeys later in Luke 22:35 asking "when I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?"—to which they responded, "nothing."

We now have everything in support of a comprehensive, tidy model of financial and material support derived from the prominence of this original Christian traveling ministry.

1. **Support was based on need.** When approved to proclaim the gospel, ministers deserve to have basic needs furnished, correspondent to the time commitments and travel demands adversely impacting employment (exemplified in Jesus as a builder, but also Peter as a fisherman).
2. **Needs were limited.** Provisional needs included food, drink, clothing, and a place to stay when traveling abroad. These constituted the “reward” God would provide to laborers through worthy households voluntarily supplying needs.
3. **Ministry was not transactable.** Ministers were not allowed to accept money as wages for payment for work or services from the recipients who benefitted.

## Comparative Needs

Now that we possess a firm model of financial support for leaders based on Jesus’ ministry and teaching, we can test and interpret relevant instructions found in the epistles in an informed way, accounting for the primary differences between a traveling leader and one who is local. Primary instruction is found in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and to Timothy, a fellow leader. We will start with 1 Cor. 9 as a controlling passage many attempt to use in support of pastoral pay. Note that between this passage and others (such as 1 Tim. 5) the Bible dedicates a considerable amount of attention to this issue of financial support compared to seemingly larger theological topics given much less attention. Instead of chalking it up as a trivial quirk, we ought to take it as a sign Paul wanted the church to get this right.

**1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle?** am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? **are not ye my work in the Lord?** 2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. 3 Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, 4 **Have we not power to eat and to drink?** 5 **Have we not power to lead about (G863) a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?** 6 **Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?** 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not

of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 **For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.** Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for **our sakes?** For **our sakes, no doubt,** this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 **If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?** 12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? **Nevertheless we have not used this power;** but suffer all things, **lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.** 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 **Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach (G2605) the gospel should live of the gospel.** 15 **But I have used none of these things:** neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. 16 **For though I preach the gospel (G2097),** I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! 17 **For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward:** but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. 18 **What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel (G2097), I may make the gospel of Christ without charge,** that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

- **G863** - periagō, *per-ee-ag'-o* From G4012 and G71; **to take around (as a companion);** reflexively to walk around: - compass, go (round) about, lead about.
- **G2605** - kataggello, *kat-ang-gel'-lo* From G2596 and the base of G32; to proclaim, promulgate: - **declare**, preach, shew, speak of, teach. (This is a **composite term from G2596 kat-ah** meaning “down from” or “according to” and **G32 ang'-el-os** means “messenger” or “especially an angel” - so together the combination means something close to a declared message from on high. See also Rom 1:8; Acts 13:5; Acts 15:36 for examples of broad proclamations.)
- **G2097** - euaggelizō, *yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo* From G2095 and G32; **to announce good news (“evangelize”)** especially the gospel: - **declare**, bring (declare, show) glad (good) tidings, preach (the gospel).

That Christian scholars frequently cite this passage in support of full-time paid pastors is truly bizarre. Even a cursory reader can identify Paul as the subject and one occupying a chief role in the church as an apostle. The works he cited to prove his power (or rights) were specifically connected to traveling, public preaching, and establishing churches. And yet in Paul (whom every modern pastor would say is worthy of a salary) we find a leader championing the superiority of serving brothers freely. Still, these rights were exclusively provisioned for missionaries working on behalf of people abroad, which is a distinctively higher role than elders or pastors who taught and administrated Jesus' commandments in a local capacity.

By itself, 1 Corinthians 9 does not directly speak to the topic of elders drawing financial support from a local church—only the apostles. Paul's commentary lines up perfectly with the

model we already observed from Jesus, summarized in v. 14, “the Lord ordained that they which preach (proclaim) the gospel should live of the gospel.”

1. **Support was based on need.** Paul characterizes his refusal of rights as a form willful suffering in 1 Cor. 9:12. This suffering is defined by the extra work required to make up for his personal needs while ministering. See 1 Thess. 2:9 “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.”
2. **Needs were limited.** In this passage Paul cites eating and drinking as examples of needs (1 Cor. 9:4). This conforms to Jesus’ instruction in Luke 10:7.
3. **Ministry was not transactable.** This is so true for Paul in Corinth that I could imagine critics suspected his emphatic refusal of “rights” here implied he financially profited elsewhere. Forbid the thought. These “rights” were the basic needs given by local households. But even these Paul forsook to make the gospel as free as free can be.

To wrap our examination of this passage in 1 Corinthians 9, we should respond to a couple views opposing this interpretation.

**Opposing View #1 (on 1 Corinthians 9):** Even if Paul meant financial support was exclusively reserved for apostles, isn’t it true that the spiritual work of elders is comparable enough to their own work? From quoted scripture (“thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox...”), to allusions of the Levitical priesthood, and to metaphors like “feeding a flock”—these all appear to resemble the work of pastors, too. Since some similarity can be drawn, doesn’t it follow that equivalent support of needs should be provided to elders as well?

The answer is no. Full time support of elders does not follow from this passage. Based on its context, support for rights like “forbearing work,” or “leading about a wife,” or “reaping carnal things” follows only for apostles—evidenced by vv. 1, 5, and 14, without even mentioning all the duties Paul listed qualifying apostleship. What makes this opposing view inadequate is the insistence that because of general similarities in work, that elders have the same rights as apostles. But their work is actually not all that similar when you break it down specifically. We may agree that 1 Cor. 9 could support the idea pastors are eligible for some lesser amount of support

(compared to an apostle), but saying it means an equal amount (or more) is an overreach.

Furthermore, Eph. 4:11 provides ground for maintaining clear distinctions between these roles.

**Opposing View #2 (on 1 Corinthians 9):** Paul preferred “making the gospel without charge” for the Corinthians in terms of their support for him and Barnabas, and provided three examples of work that are charged for out in the world: soldiering, planting, and tending flocks. Therefore, this passage can be taken as strict permission for spiritual workers to bill their congregation for services; this would permit a pastor, so long as billable hours remain elevated, to charge a full-time salary to his church.

This is why so much work was done to establish the model given by Jesus—specifically that support merely relieved one’s basic needs resulting from ministry (these needs were scripturally limited) and that ministry was not transactable. Matt. 10:8 “freely ye have received, freely give,” and the interpretation already performed on this commandment settles the matter as far as this paper is concerned, rendering any notions of Paul or others charging money in exchange for laboring in word and doctrine completely abhorrent. The term “charge” simply refers to the limited costs borne by worthy households when they cared for people’s legitimate needs. Just because Paul made use of metaphor (of paid soldiering, field work, and tending flocks) in the context of apostolic provision, doesn’t mean he advised transgressing the commandment to give freely, without payment. Anyone who supports or practices selling Christian doctrine or insight is reprehensible. Does a father charge his son or daughter for sage advice? How does this not stink of the Catholic practice of selling indulgences condemned in the Middle Ages? Since when do we charge money for good doctrine, whose original source was a cost-free fountain of wisdom and knowledge in the person of Jesus Christ? Paul elsewhere denounced this practice wholesale.

**2 Corinthians 2:17** For we are not as many, which **corrupt (G2585)** the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

■ **G2585** - *kapeleuoō*, *kap-ale-yoo'-o* From *kapeōs* (a **huckster**); **to retail**, that is, (by implication) to adulterate (figuratively): - corrupt. **To trade in the word of God, to peddle.**

Turning now to Paul’s first letter to Timothy (chapters 5 and 6), we’ll examine one of the most descriptive passages about elders and financial support in the New Testament. Any conviction garnered for conclusions drawn here will only be as good as the interpretational methodology used

to reach them. After presenting the primary passage below, we will examine contextual factors, clarify any needful terms or phrases, and then assess the logic of Paul's message.

**1 Timothy 5:17** Let the elders that rule well **be counted worthy of double honour (G5092), especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.** 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, **The labourer is worthy of his reward.**

■ **G5092** - *timē*, *tee-may'* From G5099; a **value**, that is, **money paid**, or (concretely and collectively) **valuables**; **by analogy esteem** (especially of the highest degree), or **the dignity itself**: - honour, precious, price, some.

In his letter Paul provided instruction to Timothy, a fellow missionary and overseer, on church ordinances and ethics. This part concerning financial support for elders is sandwiched between two others (1 Tim. 5:1-16 and 1 Tim. 6:1-10) dealing directly with aid for widows and men who equate godliness with gain. We should expect consistent financial instruction across all three passages. First, let's identify the two big questions in the primary passage shown above.

1. How are we supposed to interpret the word "honour" in v. 17? And what could "double honour" signify?
2. Since Paul quotes "the ox" (for a second time since 1 Cor. 9) and "the labourer is worthy of his reward" (from Jesus in Luke 10:7) how should we understand these applied to elders, and not apostles? Are there any clues as to how much support elders are due?

The word translated "honour" in v. 17 is the Greek word *timē* (*tee-may*) from Strong's G5092 which has two primary meanings. The meaning can be interpreted differently depending on the context. The first is "a value, i.e., money paid, or valuables." We see it rendered this way in the following scriptures.

**Matthew 27:6** And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the **price (G5092)** of blood.

**Acts 19:19** Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the **price (G5092)** of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.



In the same way, we find it translated in terms of “price value” in key passages from Acts which described fellowship as collecting and redistributing wealth within the church to those in need. This linguistic connection between 1 Tim. 5 and Acts will become more relevant further in our analysis.

**Acts 4:34** Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses **sold them, and brought the prices (G5092) of the things that were sold,** 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and **distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.**

**Acts 5:1** But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, **sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price (G5092),** his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Additionally, “honour” can be understood in the way it commonly sounds to English speakers as general reverence or esteem to God or respectable offices or people.

**John 4:44** For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no **honour (G5092)** in his own country.

**1 Peter 3:7** Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, **giving honour (G5092)** unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

**1 Timothy 1:17** Now **unto the King eternal,** immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be **honour (G5092)** and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We want to know whether financial support or natural esteem is the principal meaning of “honour” in 1 Tim. 5:17 “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour (G5092).” At first pass, it’s not likely esteem. Who actually contends with the universal courtesy of respecting elders, especially ones we think are virtuous? Plus, if esteem was the principal meaning, that would render 1 Tim. 5 irrelevant to all inquiries or defenses concerning paid pastors. Fortunately, the context provides its own evidence that financial support is principally in focus. Instruction about honoring widows is provided immediately before 1 Tim. 5:17.

**1 Timothy 5:3** Honour (G5091) widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite (G287 + G591) their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 9 Let not a

widow be taken into the number (G2639) under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, 10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. 11 **But the younger widows refuse:** for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 12 Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. 13 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. 14 I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. 15 For some are already turned aside after Satan. 16 **If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve** (G1884) **them, and let not the church be charged** (G916); that **it may relieve** (G1884) them that are widows indeed.

- **G5091** - timaō, *tim-ah'-o* From G5093; to prize, that is, **fix a valuation upon**; by implication to revere: - honour, value.
- **G287** - amoibē, *am-oy-bay'* From ἀμείβω ameibō (to exchange); requital: - requite. a very common word with the Greeks, requital, **recompense**, in a good and a bad sense
- **G591** - apodidōmi, *ap-od-eed'-o-mee* From G575 and G1325; to give away, that is, up, over, back, etc. (in various applications): - deliver (again), give (again), **(re-) pay** (-ment be made), perform, **recompense**, **render**, **requite**, restore, reward, sell, yield,
- **G2639** - katalegō̄, *kat-al-eg'-o* From G2596 and G3004 (in its original meaning); **to lay down**, that is, (figuratively) **to enrol: - take into the number**.
- **G1884** - eparkeō̄, *ep-ar-keh'-o* From G1909 and G714; to avail for, that is, **help: - relieve**, to **give aid from one's own resources**.
- **G916** - bareō̄, *bar-eh'-o* From G926; to weigh down (figuratively): - burden, **charge**, heavy, press.

This provides an incredible amount of detail informing our interpretation of “honour” in the immediate context. Here Paul detailed the rules for how some widows should be “honoured” (G5091) over others. In addition to providing the selection criteria concerning good works and character, Paul used terms associated with material support five times in short succession.

1. Let children or nephews requite their parents
2. If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house...
3. If any believer has widows, let them relieve them.
4. Let not the church be charged.
5. It (the church) may relieve them that are widows indeed.

Because of this, financial support appears to be the strongest meaning of timaō (G5091 “honour”). As shown below, Paul transitioned effortlessly from the verb form of honoring widows to the noun form provided to worthy elders, suggesting the “honour” is one and the same.

**1 Timothy 5:3 Honour (G5091) widows that are widows indeed.** 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents... 16 If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed. 17 **Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour (G5092)**, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

We should determine whether this financial definition of “honour” and the surrounding context tells us anything more about the methods involved administering it. In other words, where is this financial support coming from? And how is it being given? There are two primary clues. The first is found in 1 Tim. 5:9, where Paul wrote that younger widows should not be “taken into the number.” This entire phrase “taken into the number” is translated from a single Greek term katalegō̄ (G2639) which lexicons define as a compound of two ideas: (1) laying down, and (2) enrolling.<sup>3</sup> This is the only place in the New Testament katalegō̄ is used. But the language in Acts 4 indicates the same actions of “laying down” and “distributing” in the context of money shared in fellowship with believers who had need in the church.

**Acts 4:32** And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; **but they had all things common...** 34 **Neither was there any among them that lacked:** for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the **prices (G5092)** of the things that were sold, 35 And **laid them down (G5087)** at the apostles' feet: and **distribution was made (G1239) unto every man according as he had need.**

■ **G5092** - timē, *tee-may'* From G5099; **a value, that is, money paid**, or (concretely and collectively) valuables; by analogy esteem (especially of the highest degree), or the dignity itself: - honour, precious, price, some.

■ **G5087** - tithēmi, *tith'-ay-mee* A prolonged form of a primary word θέω theō̄ (which is used only as an alternate in certain tenses); **to place** (in the widest application, literally and figuratively; properly **in a passive or horizontal posture**, and thus different from G2476, which properly denotes an upright and active position, while G2749 is properly reflexive and utterly **prostrate**): - + advise, appoint,

<sup>3</sup> Blue Letter Bible’s lexical page for the Greek term katalegō̄ contains more information on its special construction and meaning from Thayer’s Greek Lexicon. See <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2639/kjv/tr/0-1/>

**bow**, commit, conceive, give, X **kneel down**, **lay** (aside, down, up), make, **ordain**, purpose, **put**, **set** (forth), **settle**, **sink down**.

■ **G1239** - diadidōmi, *dee-ad-id'-o-mee* From G1223 and G1325; **to give throughout a crowd, that is, deal out**; also to deliver over (as to a successor): - (make) distribute (-ion), **divide**, **give**.

Early Christians laid money at the feet of the apostles to be redistributed to those in need.

There is astonishing grammatical and conceptual linkage between Paul's instruction for older widows in 1 Tim. 5 and this original practice. When read in isolation, Paul instructs widows to be honoured in a vague, undefined process involving "laying down" and "registering, or enrolling" in the church. But with Acts 4 in mind, we can be quite certain Paul appealed to the exact same process of redistribution patterned off early church fellowship. Even the term "prices" in Acts 4:34 is translated from *timē* (G5092) which shares the same root word as "honour" in 1 Tim. 5:3. These powerful connections suggest the method in which both widows and elders were to be honoured was the communal distribution system. Paul taught that only certain widows could be included, but that when worthy elders drew from it, they should receive double the share.

The second clue in 1 Tim. 5 has to do with this aspect of doubling. This further supports the interpretation that "honour" was specific, rather than feelings-based, because whatever else it meant, it could be multiplied. How does one multiply a feeling of respect toward someone, much less hold others accountable to do the same? However, since the Greek word behind "honour" in 1 Tim. 5:17 is the exact same as "prices" which were distributed by church leaders in Acts 4:34, we can be sure "honour" in each passage is a discrete financial sum given to those in need. And a discrete sum of money is surely capable of being doubled.

The concept of double-honour, or double-portion also has its origin in the way Jewish patriarchs divided up their wealth to male heirs through inheritance, which was later codified and referenced in the law of Moses (Deut. 21:17). The custom was for a double portion of the estate to go to the first-born, or eldest in the family. Sometimes this honour was given to a younger son, but only in unique cases pertaining to the prophetic election of seeds of promise, who esteemed the ways of God. Jacob and Esau are the prime examples, because Jacob was younger and ultimately

had the first-born honour conferred to him by Isaac (see Gen. 27 and Heb. 11:20). Jacob was a man of learning and Esau was a man of the field. It's only consistent that we find Paul affirming a double portion of the church distribution to men in the church who have dedicated their lives to understanding and teaching God's word.

In summary, the scriptures convincingly demonstrate that Paul meant for worthy elders to be "honoured" in the same way eligible widows were. The only particular difference is that elders get double the amount. True widows were "honoured" when they partook of the church's fellowship delineated in Acts 4:32-34. In 1 Tim. 5:17, Paul told Timothy that elders are to be counted twice in this process. But all honour was conditional. There was a virtuous component (e.g., widows known for good works, and elders who ruled well). And there was an assessment of need. We have full expression of this secondary component in the way Paul ruled out widows with relatives who could help, and those young enough to remarry (or work). This second component is also affirmed by Jesus' model where needs stemmed from the necessary loss of former occupations. The only question that remains is how would an elder ever find himself in need—especially to the extent of drawing on church welfare?

Elders ruled in the vicinity of their church where they also resided. Because of this, the demands of their role were quite different than an apostle who was expected to travel extensively. This difference is evidenced in the repeated instruction that all men in the churches, without qualification, should work to earn their own money and provide for themselves.

**1 Thessalonians 4:9** But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. **10** And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: **but we beseech you, brethren,** that ye increase more and more; **11** And that ye study to be quiet, and **to do your own business, and to work with your own hands,** as we commanded you;

**2 Thessalonians 3:6** Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. **7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us:** for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; **8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought;** but wrought with labour and travail night and day, **that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.** **10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.** **11 For we hear that**

there are some which walk among you disorderly, **working not at all**, but are busybodies. 12 **Now them that are such we command** and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness **they work, and eat their own bread**. 13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

The difference is also made evident by the distinctive rights Paul asserted that he and other apostles possessed in contrast to the church in Corinth.

**1 Corinthians 9:1 Am I not an apostle?** am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?... **4 Have we not power to eat** and to drink? **5 Have we not power to lead about** a sister, a wife, **as well as other apostles**, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? **6 Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?**

But if all men in a local church (including its leaders) were required to work for themselves, how could elders ever be found lacking to the same extent as widows? Simply that in the process of dividing one's hours between leading a church and working his job, an elder might discover his income falling short of needs. For example, if it takes him 20 hours a week to study, teach, and officiate the church, leaving only 30 or 40 hours to work, it's conceivable he might struggle to pay bills. Another possibility we shouldn't ignore is the likelihood that elders were much older men, possibly in their sixties or seventies, or even older. Assuming they were fulfilling leadership duties, it's reasonable for them to require living assistance given dwindling employment opportunities. But nowhere in scripture do we find an example of an unemployed, able-bodied pastor being counted worthy of any financial support.

The model patterned by Jesus and the apostles when the phrase "the workman is worthy of his meat" was first uttered, originated during a time when pastors did not exist. This was the cradle of the New Covenant, and it's not until Paul and others began establishing churches did the role of a pastor really emerge. This role was different than an apostle chiefly because they lived and worked in the same location. However, if we can identify some partial overlap of tasks between apostles and elders, it's reasonable to suggest a partial overlap of "reward" is due. The primary role of an elder is to govern their local church and teach and defend the apostles' doctrine (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:2, 9-10; Titus 1:9). But if an elder supervised one church, an apostle planted and supervised many; if an elder operated in a single city, apostles were regarded in many.

Therefore, securing work would have been much less of an obstacle for elders than it was for apostles. If an apostle had the full right to forbear working, accepting the charity of households to supply their needs, the reasonable conclusion for elders is only a partial right to forbear working to accomplish legitimate spiritual work. Keep in mind, Paul frequently refused this right as an apostle on principle for others (Acts 20:35).

This paper does not mean to make light of the duties of an elder. Teaching, reproof, and defending doctrine, and administering judgment and governance in church is a tall order. For those who discharge the duties well, provide for their families, and yet fall into need, the church is obligated to financially supplement them from the weekly distribution—just as it should any afflicted believer according to the model in Acts 4:35. The special rule for a worthy elder is a double portion. The justification for this special honour is sourced in the preeminence of Jesus' words above all else. Recall the way Mary prioritized them over lesser things. As well as the apostles who refused to serve tables, appointing others instead in Acts 6.

**Luke 10:38** Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. **39** And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. **40** But Martha was cumbered about much servicing (G1248)... **41** And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: **42** But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

- **G1248** - diakonia, *dee-ak-on-ee'-ah* From G1249; attendance (as a servant, etc.); figuratively (eleemosynary) **aid**, (official) service (especially of the Christian teacher, or **technically of the diaconate**): - (ad-) **minister** (-ing, -tration, -try), relief, service

**Acts 6:2** Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, **It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve** (G1247) **tables**. **3** Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report... **4** **But we will give ourselves continually** to prayer, and **to the ministry of the word**.

- **G1247** - diakoneō, *dee-ak-on-eh'-o* From G1249; to be an attendant, that is, wait upon (**menially** or as a host, friend or [figuratively] teacher); technically to act as a Christian deacon: - (ad-) **minister** (unto), **serve, use the office of a deacon**.

This explains why specialized financial support for deacons is not explicitly outlined in the scriptures. Deacons are not specifically recognized for their teaching and handling of Jesus' words, despite being men of strong faith and repute. The apostles refused to squander their supreme

aptitude for such things by serving tables. Deacons are still permitted to draw from the distribution model in accordance with Acts 4:34 (if they become afflicted or lack basic needs), but they may not take a *double* portion like elders.

We have demonstrated from 1 Tim. 5 that Paul required the church to support high-performing elders if they are found in need (e.g., due to age or ailment, or deficits in personal income resulting from teaching and ruling the church). In these cases, elders should be esteemed above the rest of recipients by receiving twice the amount. Why? Because they are skilled handlers of Jesus' words, and people benefit immeasurably from these most of all. This is the only alternative conclusion that properly accounts for (1) the primary example of financial support exemplified in Jesus, (2) apostolic instruction that all men in the church need to work, (3) a comprehensive interpretation of Paul's instructions on "honouring" widows and elders in 1 Tim. 5, and (4) the standards of communal fellowship found in Acts 4:34-35.

To wrap up our work on this passage, let's provide rebuttals to some potential opposing views of our interpretation of 1 Tim. 5.

**Opposing View #1 (on 1 Timothy 5):** Since Paul quoted "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" (as he did in 1 Cor. 9 supporting the rights of the apostles to forbear working) and "The labourer is worthy of his reward" (which Jesus referenced of apostles in Luke 10:7 and Matt. 10:10), it follows that Paul must be arguing in favor of full time, needs-based support of elders in 1 Tim. 5.

This is a standard line of reasoning used by many people to support salaried pastors. However, it's a non sequitur, meaning it does not follow. For starters, the syllogism Jesus used did not specify a specific amount or type of support due to the apostles (types and amounts of material support were stipulated elsewhere); instead, it merely supports the foundation for why anything at all is due to them. Meaning, in the same way an apostle (whose work is the most demanding) can expect the church to provide all his basic needs, an elder (whose work is less demanding) can expect to take a double portion from the local distribution if he suffers need; because in both cases, the spiritual labourer is worthy of avoiding total destitution. The amount of support



prescribed for a pastor versus an apostle cannot be calculated from these sayings, only that spiritual workers deserve something, which this paper accepts and has already clarified.

Further evidence of this non sequitur has to do with how the apostles were supported, and the implied false equivalence. If we're to take the phrase "the labourer is worthy..." as meaning whatever the apostles are rewarded, elders are too, then we are met with a problem. Support for apostles came in two specific ways. First, apostles could rely on the short-term hospitality of households wherein they lodged, being provided room and board. Second, they could accept offerings from distant churches to cover their basic needs when ministering to others (see 2 Cor. 11:8-9). The onus is on opposers to explain how pastors are supposed to either live temporarily among households of their local church or receive monetary support from distant churches they don't serve (if they are due the exact same reward as apostles). Or else, they must present scriptural evidence supporting the present standard of pastoral salaries consuming the lion's share of church offerings, in the face of clear teaching from Paul that distribution was limited to a double portion, assuming they also worked, as he likewise instructed. We are sure that support for elders must be different than apostles because it was scripturally stipulated in the context of the church distribution system from Acts 4 (which was supplemental), not in the context of sending out missionaries like the apostles (which was full-fledged).

**Opposing view #2 (on 1 Timothy 5):** Any interpretation demanding that "honour" implies a narrow monetary meaning related to church fellowship, instead of one that scholars can develop over time to accommodate paying pastors, is hampered by the term "honour" showing up in 1 Tim. 6:1 where the meaning is less clear. If it's difficult to define in one location, we should be granted license to redefine it in others.

A hermeneutical approach that prioritizes getting the meaning of terms directly from the text, instead of inserting external ideas into the text, rejects the basis of this opposing view. The standard principle is to let the clearest passages speak loudest on any given term, phrase, or idea. In this case, the narrowly defined monetary meanings are derived from the supplied language in context. In chapter 6, albeit more nuanced, the same contextual grammar of money being provided to worthy individuals is still quite present.

1 Timothy 6:1 Let as many **servants as are under the yoke (G2218)** count their own **masters worthy of all honour (G5092)**, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. 2 And **they that have believing masters, let them not despise** them, because they are brethren; **but rather do them service (G1398)**, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

■ **G2218** - zugos, *dzoo-gos* From the root of ζεύγνυμι zeugnumi (to join, especially by a “yoke”); **a coupling**, that is, (figuratively) **servitude (a law or obligation)**; also (literally) the beam of the balance (as connecting the scales): - pair of balances, yoke.

■ **G5092** - timē, *tee-may* From G5099; a **value**, that is, **money paid**, or (concretely and collectively) valuables; **by analogy esteem** (especially of the highest degree), or **the dignity itself**: - honour, precious, price, some.

■ **G1398** - douleuō, *dool-yoo'-o* From G1401; to be a slave to (literally or figuratively, involuntarily or voluntarily): - **be in bondage, (do) serve (-ice)**.

To explain briefly, Paul instructed that Christians who were executing lawful work contracts (indebted to perform labor) should continue to perform their work, “honouring” the holders of the labor bonds or contracts (i.e., their masters). A service contract reconciles two sides of a deal. On one side, the labourer benefits from wages or debt reduction, and on the other, the master benefits from the servant’s physical labor. Debt and labor can both be calculated and priced in financial terms. In this case, Paul is demanding that servants not cheat their contract, but rather work hard to bestow the prized labour (“honour” timaō from G5091) to both unbelieving and believing masters, but especially the believing because they are part of the body of Christ, just like the servant. This interpretation fits very well with previous mentions of “honour” in 1 Tim. 5 where Paul instructs how widows and elders were to be esteemed fairly and financially.

## Conclusion

In summary, modern vocational church leadership is simply not derived from New Testament doctrine or history; neither can it be tolerated. Churches seem to have lost all interest in this question and are contented by how it keeps pastors behind the pulpit. But does this support the people? And to what end? Are modern Christians finding unity in the faith of the knowledge of the Son of God? Or are they being carried about with every wind of doctrine? Are believers

throwing off ungodliness and lust in order to grow unto a “perfect man” like Paul wrote about in Ephesians 4? How do paid or unpaid incentive structures hurt or help these ends?

Regardless, whoever asserts that financial support for pastors can be expressed through paid vocations deserves rebuke having deviated from the biblical standard. The prevailing view is so entrenched in recent history, it’s impossible not to see the sunk cost fallacy at work. This is when an argument appeals wholly to the time, money, or reputation already committed, that it amounts to its only strength, whose undoing is counted with debt, humiliation, and regret. Prospects of reform are felt at our most sensitive nerve endings. It’s natural to want to lay this grief squarely at the feet of whoever brings the charge. But the church can either maintain this compromised position, rationalized under the banner of evolving orthodoxy, or it can rehabilitate to the original standard and bear its cost. At least rehabilitation comes with the benefit of clear consciences and a more equitable environment for all believers. And it’s on this point about equity this paper intends to spend the last word.

We have all but lost a distinctive feature once revered in the church regarding our brotherly love and care for the poor. In Acts we see a picture of selfless governance apt to thrive in any context, where the rich cheerfully distributed wealth if it meant less fortunate Christians could feed their family. Where gatherings were referred to as “feasts of charity” (Jude 1:12). Where leaders chose toil over comfort if it meant reducing burdens or giving proper examples to follow, who shuddered at the thought of teaching out of financial compulsion, and whose mantra was a rally cry of remembrance that “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). These were the priorities, not salary negotiations or how to pay for expensive buildings, equipment, and landscapes.

Churches are supposed to operate like families (Matt. 12:45; Eph. 2:19; Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 5:1-2). Families are not just affectionate; in fact, their most common display of love is the sharing of wealth and want, for better or for worse. A typical father doesn’t begrudge working to earn money for his wife, or his children, or in some cultures, his aging parents, all while tending to their

higher needs as well. But it would be a strange infringement of authority for him to quit working to earn money in order to pursue a passion he's forbidden to retail, all while laying the burden of making ends meet on dependents. And yet, this is the spitting image of most pastors today. They are not gainfully employed in the real economy; instead, they inundate themselves with activities which should not be priced and encourage less mature followers to provide them with great livelihoods. Don't say the church is not acting like a family, because it is... like a dysfunctional one with greedy and negligent heads of house.

None of us have wrestled with this question enough: why was Paul so concerned over Corinth, fearing the gospel would be hindered if he didn't work to provide for his own needs? Maybe it was a pure self-control play to prevent any abuse of rights (see 1 Cor. 9:12, 18, 27). Considering the countless warnings about the love of money, such personal caution seems warranted. But that doesn't fully account for his worry and love for them. They were puffed up (1 Cor. 5:2) and fractured over celebrities (1 Cor. 1:12) and they despised humble examples (1 Cor. 1:28, 2:1; 1 Cor. 4:5-13). As a proverbial father who planted this church, Paul feared for their souls, seeing how keen they were to reject what is plain and modest in favor of what is contemporary and wise, amassing for themselves ten thousand instructors, but not many fathers. And yet it's always the good fathers who lay up for the children, not the children for the father (2 Cor. 12:14).