

STEWARDSHIP OF FINANCE IN A LOCAL BAPTIST CHURCH

A CASE STUDY OF IJERU BAPTIST CHURCH,

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ABSTRACT

The present day local Baptist church is being re-awakened to its missionary responsibility through a commitment to the Great Commission. Yet, the stewardship development of its members is stunted. As a result, many of its members remain unfaithful in their giving for missions. This has an adverse effect on the missionary efforts of the church. One of the reasons for the stunted stewardship development of members is that stewardship messages are grossly inadequate both on the pulpit and in our Bible Study programmes.

This is what has prompted the writer to write on "Stewardship of Finance" using Ijeru Baptist Church, Ogbomoso, as a case study; with the view of highlighting ways of motivating the members to give freely and willingly.

Just as the title of the paper has indicated, the essay treats what stewardship of finance entails, the biblical basis for church financing in both the Old and New Testaments, the attitudes of members generally toward finance and what Jesus Christ expects from Christians. What the attitudes of Ijeru Baptist Church members are toward giving is also extensively looked into.

B. Conclusion

As stated in the introductory part of this write-up, stewardship of finance is just an aspect of the stewardship of all of life. Thus,

stewardship of finance, because it is difficult for church members to implement as opposed to other aspects of stewardship, Christians tend to separate it from the stewardship of all of life. This they do because of their lack of God's position as the Owner of both their money and they themselves who possess the money. Most Christians have failed to see themselves as trustees and not as owners and that they are going to account for whatever has been entrusted into their hands (Lk. 19:11-26).

Efforts have been made to establish tithing as an important biblical means of financing the church, with reference to both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Stewardship of finance in contemporary Local Baptist church has been the focus of the write-up. Member's attitudes toward finance have been extensively looked into. For those Christians who oppose tithing as a means of financing the church, efforts have been made to educate them from scriptures in order for them to see where they have gone wrong. As for those who see one-tenth or tithing as a limiting factor for some of those who would like to contribute more, it was made clear that there is nothing wrong in giving more than the tithe. But Christians are advised to first start with the tithe.

What Jesus Christ expects from members as regards their attitudes to finance generally is also highlighted. Obligation for giving in Ijeru Baptist Church, Ogbomoso, was critically looked into with the help of questionnaires, and the result well presented in the paper. Recommendation as to how stewardship of finance should be

addressed both by members and churches are given to round-up the write up.

The main message of this essay is about the stewardship of finance which is a part of the stewardship of all of life. The problem facing most Christians is their failure to understand that they are responsible to God for the right use of 'their' money. This is glaringly evident in their not being faithful to God especially in their tithing.

C. Recommendations

The church has a responsibility to every man, woman and child after they have been won to Christ. The failure of the church to emphasize the message of Christian stewardship is reflected in many phases of its activity. For instance "it is seen in the feeble evangelistic zeal of this generation as compared with the crusading fervour of early Methodism." It is seen in the pitifully small proportion of the total income of the Christian church which is devoted to the missionary task. It is also reflected in the large member of vacancies in positions demanding full-time service for the cause of Christ' (Thomas 143).

The fault, however, has been traced to many church leaders through widespread neglect of stewardship education and training as revealed in a survey made by Dr. James W. Workman - of the General Board of Lay Activities of the Methodist Church. Church leaders responding to one of the questionnaires sent out have these to say "I would not call mine a real emphasis upon stewardship;" "I have not been successful and I am sorry;" "Please, understand that I do not know how to train people in stewardship;" "I am perplexed by the

whole matter” (Thomas 149). If these confessed failures could come from leaders in the churches the fault could not be totally that of the church members. “Many churches, individuals and church leaders excuse their neglect of stewardship of finance by declaring that “People don’t want to hear so much about duty or obligation’ (149).

A thorough understanding of the scriptures is required by Christians in order to have a good knowledge of what are expected of stewards, and what stewardship of finance actually entails and calls for. Christians are therefore advised to see the daily reading of, and meditation in the Word as tasks that must be accomplished. Scripture reading and meditation in the Word are very helpful not only for stewardship of finance but for solid spiritual formation which contribute to meaningful stewardship of all of life.

Teaching stewardship of finance effectively requires stewardship tracts. Most church leaders do not see these tracts as very important, and this is one of the reasons why most members do not know what to do with their money.

It is observed that in some situation the tithe cards contain small envelopes which are too small to contain large tithes. It is suggested that official envelopes in which the tithe cards and the tithe will be included be introduced. Note, however, that the name of the tither should be written on the envelope.

To save time, tithe and offering boxes can be placed on one side of the gates entering the church for members to drop their tithes and

offering as they come in. So that it is only the prayer that will be offered at a time stipulated for the collections in the bulletin.

It is also suggested that money collected should be counted by people on rotations so that the counters will not be missing the message every Sunday.

Importance of Stewardship Finance To The Cooperative Of Nigerian Baptist Convention

The cooperative programme “depicts the interdependence of each church with others of like-faith... the Baptist way of pooling their financial resources together for the collective responsibility assigned by God” (Ishola 50).

“Our system of voluntary cooperation is based on mutual trust, confidence and integrity. If these breakdown, we cannot succeed” (Nihinlola 2).

The degree of success that can be attained in the cooperative programme depends on how the local churches are committed to it in the three-tiers administration of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. This is purely a spiritual matter. The commitment of the local churches to the larger bodies is more like the commitment of a worshipper to a local congregation. Although only God can fully evaluate faithfulness, sometimes, it can be perceived by on lookers.

When a church voluntarily joins the Convention, Conference or Association, it is voluntarily agreeing to forgo some of its rights for the common good. When decisions are taken at these meetings, for the sake of our cooperate integrity, let us not rush to disobey them in the name of autonomy (Osuigire 32).

