

Scriptural way for raising funds in a congregation

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INTRODUCTION

This brief was presented on *the Leadership Platform WhatsApp Group* in Nigeria, with the aim of sensitizing those in leadership positions in various local churches about scriptural fund-raising. Given the persisting effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic, national economic recession prior to and after the Corona-induced Lockdown, there has been lull in economic activities and returns on a global scale. This has impacted both individual saints and congregations that seek to live comfortably and meet their financial obligations. Thus, in a quest to boost church finances, it becomes imperative to remind brethren of the God-endorsed-approach to raise funds. This is to ensure that desperation or ignorance do not incline congregations to adopt means or schemes that are neither lawful nor expedient.

Definitions

- Scriptural way – approach which harmonizes or is in tandem with the New Testament teaching
- Congregation – a local assembly of Christians that worship and work as a unit - 1 Cor 1:2
- Raising funds –acquiring money, generating or collating financial instruments.

Why raise funds?

The church can only gather and/or expend funds on things related to its divinely given mandate, which are to:

1. Glorify God -Eph 3:20-21
2. Worship in spirit and in truth –Jn 4:23-24
3. Engage in good works ordained by God –Eph 2:10
 - **Edify itself** in love –Eph 4:16
 - Declare God’s manifold wisdom and **evangelize the world** -2 Cor 9:1,12, Eph 3:10
 - Relief its **own needy** by supplying the material needs pertaining to food, clothing, shelter and medication -1 Tim 5:9-10,15, James 2:14-16; 5:14

The matter of church finance or money management is important because the **church needs money** to operate effectively. A congregation just as a member could be tempted monetarily:

A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things -Ecc110:19

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows - 1 Tim 6:10

God will not allow a saint or a congregation to be tempted beyond measure, He will make a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13). We should always trust in Him that our needs will be met (Phil 4:19, Heb 13:5-6).

MODES OF RAISING FUNDS (With Examples)

There are various ways through which men may raise funds as individuals or as corporations. However, for brethren acting as a church, there is a divinely prescribed WAY for raising funds.

I. The scriptural way

The scriptural way a congregation may employ to raise funds refer to how to acquire money (financial assets –cash, cheque, gift cards, money order, etc.) and defray expenses (via presentation of receipts, documentary evidence of paid-up goods and services, etc.), according to the New Testament.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus commended free-will sacrificial giving (Lk 6:38; 21:1-4) and the payment of tithe (Mt 23:23) since the law was still in operation (Gal 4:3-4, Mt 5:17-19). It is acknowledged that today, we are under the New Covenant and not the law of Moses (Jn 1:17, Heb 8:6-

8). Thus, God's people are no more governed by the law of tithes and levies of the Aaronic priesthood but by the freewill giving of Christ's priesthood which is of the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-19). The NT church pattern of raising funds/materials via FREEWILL GIVING is evident:

1. **Freewill sacrificial donation of goods and money by members at any time to meet obvious needs of the immediate brethren. This is distributed to the needy as soon as received in the church during an emergency situation [e.g. at its origin, unexpected natural disaster].** Consider 1 John 3:17 typified...

And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need... Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need - Acts 2:44-45; 4:34

Each Christian gives based on ability not in competition or for attention as Ananias and Sapphira did in Acts 5. Ideally, the rich members ought to take care of most of the church's needs as volunteers (1 Tim 6:17-18). Such may use their wealth to glorify God and relieve the church from bearing certain expenses. From these, we learn this principle: "Do what you can with what you have, rather than dream about what you would or could do with riches you don't have." Examples include those that:

- Allowed the church to meet in their house e.g. Mary (Acts 12:12), Aquila and Priscilla (Rm 16:3-5), Gaius (Rm 16:23), Philemon (1:1-2), etc. Today, generous individuals still do so or build and donate church hall or pay the rent for the meeting place.
- Accommodated ministers or facilitated their travel expenses such as Lydia (Acts 16:12), Gaius (3 John 1:1-6). Today, few do likewise, gift a car / phone unto a minister, etc.
- Are full of good works insomuch that certain corporate benevolent deed unto a saint need not be charged to the church. Such like Dorcas (Acts 9:36,39) notice and handle needs discreetly but are nevertheless observed and appreciated.

2. **Freewill giving of money by members on the first day of the week to be saved up for planned or scheduled desired projects.**

*And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. **Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:** Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul -Acts 11:27-30*

*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have **given order** to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.** And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me -1 Corinthians 16:1-4*

Paul and his fellow-workers were raising funds for the Jerusalem Church from the Gentile brethren (2 Cor 8:5-8). How the money was to be raised in each church was communicated as an ORDER unto the churches of Galatia, and reiterated unto the saints in Corinth (1 Cor 16:1-4). Before attending to outside needs, the issues within must be addressed. A church would first take of its bills such as its ministers, any destitute member, etc. Faithful disciples understand that we are created for good works (Eph 2:10), are equipped for good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and are to be zealous for same (Tit 2:11-14).

II. Ascriptural ways

These are non-Bible based methods, sometimes used by church leaders due to evolving societal culture. [Brethren assert that church leaders could do so discretionally, as wise stewards.] These include:

- Selling-off a depreciated item so as to add money from the church purse in order to purchase another e.g. disposing of a hall or vehicle in order to acquire another one that is more spacious, comfortable and easier to maintain. This is a pragmatic one-off transaction which is necessitated because nobody has offered to freely replace the current item.
- Taking a Loan especially a Mortgage to finance a building. This is common in the western world where large cash transactions are rare / suspicious. The culture there promotes Credit purchase of expensive things and defraying cost in installments, over a period of time.
- Writing unto other churches and soliciting for assistance to raise specified amounts for a congregation's project. Many regard this as informing others about a need and compare it to Agabus' or Paul's sensitization of Gentile saints about the Jerusalem issue. After all, a preacher may be supported (Rm 15:24-28, 1 Cor 9). However, some state that preacher and church support differs. That the inspired ministers only mentioned 'the distant need' without expressly asking for money to meet a required target. It is noted that the Jerusalem predicament was precipitated by natural constraint or disaster, it wasn't that a church with *little strength* (Rev 3:7-8) willfully designed an enormous project beyond its ability and started looking for co-sponsors to execute it.

III. Antiscriptural ways

These are approaches that are contrary to the express dictates of the New Covenant. The church is a spiritual kingdom rendering spiritual service (Eph 3:10-21). She ought not revert to abolished Mosaic directives or human concepts to raise money for its activities. Such include:

- Teaching about and collecting Tithes, levying different category of members to pay up certain amounts as mandatory fee, etc.
- Organizing 'Luncheons programs' where the high and mighty within and outside the faith are invited to come 'Launch' something, with such specially recognized and celebrated in that church service. (see James 2:1-4)
- Charging entrance fee at some church services, billing members to officiate at the person's program such as 'wedding, child-naming or burial ceremony.'
- Making the church own and/or manage business-concerns or commercial outfits like bakery, supermarket, fee-paying school, cinema, etc. or occasionally conducting Bazaar, car-wash, etc. to raise funds.

CONCLUSION

Biblically, a local church gets financed primarily from freewill contributions of its members, not from loans, levies, charges, business investments, etc. She may also receive donations from other local churches or even outsiders who are aware of her needs and desire to assist. The church spends the Lord's money in her custody only on those things which He authorizes in His word either by direct statement or inference/ example /expediency. Controversial methods of fund-raising which engender disputes and division should be avoided. When leaders manage and expend the church funds judiciously as good managers, members shall willingly give more for greater service whenever the need arise.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord -1 Corinthians 15:58

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