



By Dr. Richard Youngblood

Question: Why are churches always asking for money? I give to my church regularly, but does God expect me to give to every fundraiser, or special appeal a church has?

It has been said that many Americans have stopped attending church because they came to believe churches are more interested in their money than in them. They may cite as examples churches that pass the collection plate at almost every meeting, send regular appeals into homes and have numerous fundraising events. Others express concern about the amounts of money spent on fancy church buildings while there remains a need to care for the hungry, homeless and suffering people in our communities.

Obviously, no church can continue to exist without money. If we expect the church to meet the spiritual and sometimes material needs of its members and to provide outreach ministries to the community, we must give to support it. Can you imagine a father saying to his family: “I’m tired of your constantly needing food, clothing, home, medicine and other things; I’m going to stop giving to you.”? No. The father understands that financial support goes with having a family. The same is true of our spiritual family, the church.

However, I believe Jesus would recommend that all of us *examine our priorities*. Jesus said to “seek first the Kingdom of God” and the physical needs will be provided (Matthew 6:33-34). He also said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Matthew 6:19-21). We should apply these principles to both individuals and churches. Although churches in the Bible did not have their own buildings, it is not wrong for a church to own a building. However, we need to remember that the church is people, not a building. Jesus focused his ministry on people, especially the poor, the sick and others in need of help (Matt. 25:31-46). We should feel good about giving to a church with the priorities of Jesus.

In addition, *churches can generally limit their budgets to what can be supported by regular offerings of their own members*. The early Christians first gave themselves and then of their money as an expression of their love for the Lord and faith in his promises (2 Corinthians 8:5, 8, 12). Each one was encouraged to “give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV). Outsiders, those who were not committed believers in the Lord, were not asked to support the church’s work. The Christians brought together their offerings on the first day of every week (1

Corinthians 16:2) as God had prospered them in the previous week. When this kind of giving motivated by love and gratitude for God's blessing is practiced, additional fund raising methods should become unnecessary.

Finally, we need to give to the Lord not because God needs our petty little gifts but because we belong to him and we want to follow in his steps. There may be abuses in churches, but that does not free us from the responsibility to give as God has blessed us.

[Send questions or comments or request for a copy to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071, phone 270-753-1881 or email richardy@murray-ky.net] 2011/05/27