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The Counterfeit Christianity of Tele-evangelists – Part I

By Dave Miller

1. “Send Money! “

Let's begin with the notion of appealing to viewers for money. Is it proper for religious speakers to ask people who are viewing their program for money? The Bible answer to that question is, "No." Notice carefully what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2: *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.”*

From 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, and Acts 4:32-35, we learn this clear point: *God made provision for his work to be financed by the local church members, who give their money every Sunday in the assembly.* From that treasure, from that pool of money, the Lord's work is to be funded. Therefore, based on these passages a Christian has no right to get on television and to indiscriminately solicit contributions from viewers. That is an *unscriptural, unauthorized, unbiblical* means of raising money.

2. “Make a Vow and Send Money!”

Let's look at the idea of urging people to make a vow to the Lord to send money to a tele-evangelist. This, too, is *unbiblical*. Granted, you as a television viewer are free to use your money as you see fit. But God ordained that Christians are to contribute a percentage of their income *to the local church where they are a member.* From that point, the elders, or shepherds, of that local congregation are to make the decisions as to how that money is to be spent. That is, in fact, God's arrangement (Acts 20:28). The work of an evangelist ought to be overseen and monitored by the eldership of a local church where that evangelist is a member. If people would follow these scriptures, many of the abuses that we are seeing would cease.

Various individuals in the Bible did make vows to God. That is, they made a decision, a commitment, to serve God in a certain way - for instance, giving of their possessions or their money. But that certainly does *not* mean that you, as a television viewer, should simply turn your money over to some tele-evangelist who insists that he is the "receptacle" where viewers' vows to God are to be "deposited." The Bible teaches that you will be held accountable for how you use your money (1 Cor. 4:2. Matt. 25:14-30), so we had better be careful to whom we give our money! We had better make certain we know *how our money is used*, in light of God's will.

3. "Make Money by Giving Money!"

What about the notion of telling people that if they will send in \$100 or \$ 1,000, they can expect to receive back double or triple or more? This idea also runs counter to Bible teaching. Now it is true that God blesses those who are faithful to him. But all God has technically promised the Christian is that the Christian will have, in this life, food and clothes. Read closely 1 Timothy 6:8, "*but having food and covering we shall be there with content.*" Beyond that, God has not promised that we are going to be successful monetarily, that we are going to earn lots of money and be wealthy. As a matter of fact, God condemns the heart and motive of "*giving in order to get back*" (Acts 20:35). We are to give to others, expecting nothing in return (Luke 6:35).

What we are seeing today among the so-called tele-evangelists, is a sort of fast-paced business investment technique in which people are urged to *give to them* in order to *receive large quantities back*. That is simply not taught in the Bible. Paul warned that those who want to get rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction (1 Tim. 6:9-10). He added, "*But thou. O man of God, flee these things*" (v. 11). In Ephesians 4:28 Paul said man should "*labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.*" And what about Hebrews 13:5? "*Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have.*"

These, and many other scriptures, stand in stark contrast with the greedy, money-making appeals that some are promoting. This attitude, in fact, is seen in Simon in Acts chapter 8. Simon approached the apostles and offered them money in hopes of receiving a spiritual gift to work a miracle. He wanted a *return* on his *investment*. Do you know what Peter said to him? "*But Peter said unto him. Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money.*" Peter not only refused to accept money from the man who had these kinds of expectations, he went so far as to declare that both the man and his money would perish eternally unless he would repent. Listen again to Paul: "*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou. O man of God, flee these things: and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*" (1 Tim. 6:10-11).

When was the last time you saw a tele-evangelist talking about those qualities rather than money? We ought to be talking about godliness on television, not greed - faith, not finances. We ought to be talking about meekness, not money.