

Is Yechiel Eckstein Worth His Weight in Gold?

As the head of a nonprofit that is almost entirely supported by donations, what makes Yechiel Eckstein's compensation noteworthy is its proportion to his organization's overall income compared to other ministries. While the salary and benefit package of the head of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ) is at least five times higher than any other leader of an Israel-related ministry, clocking in at \$1.2 million, Eckstein's compensation is more than double what the president of World Vision—a ministry with a budget 10 times larger—earns.

World Vision's Richard Stearns earned \$456,718 in salary and benefits in 2011, according to the organization's tax return. But World Vision has a \$1 billion annual budget, whereas last year IFCJ's budget was \$113 million.

Meanwhile, Billy Graham, founder of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), earned \$228,448 in total compensation in 2011, and his son, Franklin Graham, president of BGEA, earned \$115,307. The organization is similar in size to the IFCJ with \$92 million in revenues in 2011.

Linda Lampkin, resource director for the Economic Research Institute office in Washington, D.C., calculated the average direct compensation for executive directors at similar-sized religious organizations and found Eckstein's pay is well above the average, which is \$276,807. The computer-generated comparison showed executive directors at organizations with similar-sized budgets—\$100-\$110 million—earned anywhere from \$163,675 to \$389,938 annually.

"It is fair to say an executive director at a religious organization who makes nearly \$500,000 annually in direct

compensation and also has significant other compensation is paid well outside the mean ranges of executive directors at similar organizations with an approximate \$100 million to \$110 million in revenues,” Lampkin told *Charisma*.

How much are those in charge of these Israel-related ministries actually making?

It’s often implied that any leader of a nonprofit ministry or organization who earns more than Mother Teresa is somehow gouging the public. Obviously, that isn’t true. Running a large organization—whether a college, a hospital or a church—is complicated and requires hard work. By not paying market-rate salaries, the talent needed to run such organizations tends to go to where he or she can be compensated commensurate with his or her ability. Even Jesus said a “laborer is worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:7).

Some organizations don’t like to reveal what their leaders make, however, because they fear donations would decrease if people knew. In the world of Christian ministries, that’s especially true—as proven by such examples as the short-lived “scandal” surrounding Franklin Graham’s compensation package as the head of both Samaritan’s Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

At the same time, in American culture there is a feeling that some financial matters should be out in the open. For example, it’s required by law that the public knows the salaries of elected officials. And those who run a publicly owned company must publicize the salaries of top management so investors can make investing decisions based on whether they feel those leaders are looking out for the investor or themselves.

Even the Bible says people do things differently in the light than in darkness. So in that spirit, *Charisma* inquired about the salaries of some of the ministries’ leaders.

We found ministry leaders’ pay ranged from zero to that of

Eckstein. By comparison, leaders from three of the other largest Israel-related ministries earned substantially less: Jonathan Bernis earned \$224,233 in total compensation (salary and benefits), Jews for Jesus Executive Director David Brickner earned \$200,000 and Chosen People Ministries President Mitch Glaser earned \$174,767. (The salary and benefit package of Christians United for Israel Executive Director David Brog could not be obtained.)

Among the other ministries, no salary was above \$90,500. And with Eckstein's removed from the equation, the average salary of those leaders willing to disclose their compensation—and including those who take no salary—was \$85,856.

How We Came Up With This Report

Given the magnitude and importance of the mission of Israel-related ministries—and in an effort to help promote financial transparency, integrity in fundraising efforts and the proper use of donations—*Charisma* requested financial information from 17 Israel-related ministries.

To begin its seven-month investigation into the financial stewardship of these ministries, *Charisma* requested financial information from each organization, along with an interview with its president or lead representative. We also obtained the 990 tax returns that some of the ministries voluntarily filed with GuideStar, which tracks the finances of more than 1.8 million IRS-recognized nonprofits. Under federal law, ministries are not required to publicly disclose tax returns, but some do so voluntarily to be financially transparent.

In its examination of ministry finances, *Charisma* also consulted with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), which accredits various ministries, and Charity Navigator, an independent nonprofit organization that evaluates American charities. Of the 17 ministries, the following seven are accredited by ECFA: Chosen People

Ministries, Jews for Jesus, Christian Friends of Israel, Bridges for Peace, Maoz Israel, Jewish Voice Ministries International and the Messianic Jewish Israel Fund.

Having worked with many of the ministries in the past and seen their fruit up close through the years, *Charisma's* intent was not to dig up any figurative buried skeletons, but instead to inform our readers as to the unique vision, purpose and scope of ministry for each organization. We believe financial stewardship goes hand in hand with this and, as a result, celebrate those Israel-related ministries that are taking every precaution to be faithful with what God has given them.