

We Need to Deal With These Sick Practices in God's House

One night, I flipped on a Christian TV show, only to see a well-known fund-raiser preaching a powerful message on Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. I had seen him once or twice before, using the biblical feasts to raise large offerings. I said to myself, "There's no way he's going to take something as sacred as the agony of our Lord in Gethsemane and turn it into a fund-raising trick. He couldn't do that."

Sure enough, he did. I was sick to my stomach. What kind of person uses the Savior's suffering to bilk God's people of their money?

One of my friends knows this brother personally and told me he's very sincere, he's a great pastor, and he genuinely believes in what he's doing. That makes it even more pathetic to me. It's one thing if you're a total charlatan living a double life, preaching for money one day and partying with the world the next. But in this case the manipulative fund-raiser was said to be a committed pastor. What else could he justify in the name of the Lord?

As former *Charisma* editor Lee Grady wrote:

Greed has actually morphed into a virtue in some charismatic circles, where pastors take hourlong offerings and guest speakers require limousines and five-figure honorariums to maintain their celebrity lifestyles. It's especially bad on some Christian TV channels, where spiritual extortionists sell medieval-style indulgences disguised as "Day of Atonement offerings" and use other ridiculous ploys to rob Christians.

When will this garbage stop?

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "You see, we are not like the many hucksters who preach for personal profit. We preach the word of God with sincerity and with Christ's authority, knowing that God is watching us" (2 Cor. 2:17, NLT). This was an issue in Paul's day. Paul and his colleagues were aware that God was watching them, which begs the question "Have today's mercenary prophets no fear of the Lord?"

Perhaps some of them were trained by other corrupt leaders and for them this is the normal way of doing things. After all, I've heard it argued, in Bible days you wouldn't dare approach a prophet without bringing some kind of gift. So why think you can go to a prophet for guidance today without bringing a financial gift? The answers are not hard to find.

First, these prophets did not charge for their services. Some contemporary prophets do. Second, people would bring a gift of appreciation to the man of God, such as a loaf of bread. This was out of respect and helped supply his day-to-day needs. There was no fee required, and in most cases in the Bible there's no mention of a gift being given. Third, the prophet would not be getting rich off the gifts of the people. Ministering for money was strongly condemned by the true prophets, and priestly and prophetic greed was rebuked and exposed. Fourth, charging for prophecy is just as ungodly as charging for healing. Show me one place in the Bible where a leader required a payment before praying for the sick.

I believe in supporting God's servants, and as someone who has been in full-time ministry for decades, I appreciate the generosity of God's people. But there is a massive difference between helping to meet the legitimate needs of a ministry and getting rich off the gospel.

Here, then, is a word of warning to every mercenary minister and every professional prophet from the Lord Jesus Himself: "For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light"

(Luke 8:17, ESV). And, “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36–37, ESV). May God have mercy and grant repentance before it’s too late. {eoa}

*This passage is an excerpt from Playing With Holy Fire (Charisma House, 2018) written by **Michael L. Brown, Ph.D.**, who is the founder and president of AskDrBrown Ministries. Dr. Brown served as a leader in the Brownsville Revival from 1996–2000, and out of this significant spiritual movement he and his leadership team birthed the FIRE School of Ministry, which Dr. Brown serves as president and faculty member. He is host of the nationally syndicated, daily talk radio show, the Line of Fire With Dr. Michael Brown—“your voice of moral, cultural and spiritual revolution”—as well as the host of shows on GOD TV, NRB TV, and INI TV. His syndicated columns appear on many leading websites, and his work has been featured in The Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, the Charlotte Observer, the Charlotte Magazine, Citizen magazine and other publications.*