



BURNOUT AND MINISTER'S SALARIES

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*"How much do you need?"
"What can you get by on?"
"How much of a cut can you take?"
"That's more than we paid our last preacher."*

These are just a few of the numerous remarks I have heard over the years relative to negotiations related to minister's salaries.

Few subjects are open to more speculation than the salary of a minister. If the congregation has two hundred members there will be two hundred opinions. Some will think he is being paid too much; others will think he is not paid enough.

The gossip lines are full of rumors relative to how much a new preacher is being paid at a congregation across town.

There are two extremes relative to the salaries of ministers. In one city, the preacher of a 200 member congregation is paid \$35,000 per year; on the other side of town, the preacher for a 200 member congregation is paid \$80,000.

Back in 1999 the median salary of a Protestant minister, including housing, was \$40,000 a year. According to a survey conducted by Abilene Christian University, church of Christ ministers averaged less than \$27,000 that same year. At the same time the median salary for a teacher with a graduate degree was \$45,000.

From a November 18, 2003 article, the St Louis Post-Dispatch contained "Popular TV Preachers and Their Outrageous Salaries" <http://www.rickross.com/reference/meyer/meyer19.html>.

- Kenneth and Gloria Copeland's "Believer's Voice of Victory" have an annual ministry revenue close to \$70 million.
- Jan and Paul Crouch, owners of TBN (Trinity Broadcast Network), and their son Paul Crouch, Jr. said they earned a total of \$855,000 last year, according to the Los Angeles Times. The ministry provides the Crouches a \$10 million, 80-acre, eight-home ranch near Dallas and two Land Rovers the Crouches drive. In 2001, the couple bought a \$5 million ocean front estate in Newport Beach, Calif.
- Creflo Dollar's ("Changing Your World" TV program on TBN), drives a black Rolls-Royce and travels in a \$5 million private jet.
- Benny Hinn's TV program "This is Your Day" is seen throughout the United States and in nearly 200 foreign countries. Hinn told CNN in 1997 that he drew an annual salary of \$500,000 to \$1 million a year. He has a \$3.5 million home in Los Angeles and drives an \$80,000 Mercedes-Benz G500.

How contrasting are these examples with the lifestyle of Jesus, the one they are representing: "And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew 8:19, 20).

The Bible clearly affirms the right of the preacher to be supported by the Gospel: "Even so hath the

Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14). “The laborer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7). “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches” (Galatians 6:6, NIV). Read also Philippians 4:8-20.

The challenging question for church leadership is: How do we determine the salary of the minister? Here are some items to consider:

- What are his basic qualifications? His documented education, experience, work record, years in ministry, and skills.
- Ask, what would someone with his same qualifications be paid by a major company, community institution or other work venue?
- What is the average income in your community? This is where he will live.
- What is the size of his family? Does he have children in college? Special needs children?
- Ask him to prepare an offer stating what he needs to work with the congregation.
- Do you know all the IRS tax breaks given to ministers? Knowing and using these can increase a minister’s salary without raising additional money from the budget.
- Pray for wisdom to handle this aspect of hiring a minister in an honorable and business way. Put it into a contract so all parties will be on the same page.

Keep in mind that financial issues, which salary is a major one, contribute to stress and ministry burnout. Education is the key. The **Jeremiah Institute** is committed to providing educational materials and seminar opportunities to prevent stress and burnout. Visit us often. Ask questions. Make comments. Contact us!