

5 Mistakes Pastors Make With Finances

By [Ron Edmondson](#) April 27, 2023

I have noticed pastors making mistakes with church finances. When I came into ministry it was after a long business career, so I'm sometimes considered unique in my involvement or interest in our church finances. Therefore, I work closely with our Business Administrator and finance committee on the budget and administration of our church finances.

I have been known to negotiate contracts, meet with bankers and I can intelligently analyze financial statements. Thankfully, I understand the business side of the church. It comes natural for me.

Working with different churches over the years, I've seen lots of approaches by pastors in this area of finances. Some are completely hands-on, while others run from the issue completely. It's helped me form some thoughts around the topic; specifically some mistakes I think we can avoid.

Here are the top mistakes pastors make regarding finances:

Not knowing anything.

The pastor doesn't have to be business-minded. He can surround himself with wise counsel, but the pastor needs some basic knowledge in order to lead the church effectively.

Learn to read the financial documents of the church. Get some basic training in financial terms so you can lead people well. Especially in today's world of speculation and trust issues, those who give to a church want to know that

leadership has a handle on the finances of the church before they are willing to invest in the mission.

Handling too much.

The pastor never, ever, ever needs to be the sole person to handle money. I'm careful even when someone hands me a check in the hall. I quickly find someone on our finance committee or our Business Administrator. I would never want to sign checks.

As pastors, we have to remain "above reproach" and that's especially true in this area of finances. For appearances, but also to guard our own heart. Temptation is huge for all of us in the area of money.

Being Controlling.

When the pastor is the only one who decides how the budget of the church is going to be spent a few problems occurs. First, great ideas are left off the table. Collaboration is the best approach to most decisions, but especially spending someone else's (God's) money. Second, the pastor becomes too powerful. Money is power. In the business world and the church world. The pastor doesn't need that load of responsibility on his own.

Finally, eventually people begin to mistrust the system, the pastor, and even the church. The pastor will make some decision no one agrees with and the troubles begin. Beware. Invite trusted people into the process.

Not asking for money.

If the church is going to disciple people, it can't avoid the subject of money. This isn't even as much about funding the ministry. God can take care of that. If you're following His will on what you do, He can fund it.

This is about leading people to be disciples. As we know, God doesn't fully have a person's heart until He has control of their finances. Pastors, we have to teach this to our people.

Not being transparent.

You don't have to share details that people don't care about, but there shouldn't be any secrets when people ask. Keeping people abreast of the general financial welfare of the church is critical.

I heard from a church once that was in serious financial difficulty, but no one in the church except the pastor and bookkeeper even knew. When it was found out, there were obvious repercussions—anger, frustration, hurt. Those emotions can usually be avoided if people know in advance where you stand. Money is a big issue for all churches—for all of us. Which is surely why the Bible addresses it so often. As pastors, we must diligently lead our churches wisely in this important matter of Kingdom ministry.