

CULTWATCH | How Pastors Get Rich

How Pastors Get Rich

This article exposes the secret methods certain pastors use to get rich off God's people. Have you ever wondered how some pastors start a church and then become wealthy living in flash houses and driving luxury cars? Well this article exposes how they do it, extracting money from their congregations to fund their lifestyles. Here are the secrets they definitely do not want you to know.



How Pastors Get Rich

Important Note: As you read please remember that very few pastors use the techniques you are about to discover. The great majority of Christian pastors do not earn much money even though they work hard at their jobs. Most Christian pastors would find these techniques repugnant. Please do not make the mistake of tarring the many good pastors with the brush reserved for the spiritually corrupt few.

Table of Contents

- Introduction
- The Multilevel Marketing Pattern
- Books
- DVDs
- Hyped Conferences
- The Christian Speaking Circuit
- Pastor Owned Businesses that Feed Off the Flock
- The Honor the Pastor Scam
- High Pressure Offerings
- Cathedral Building Wars
- Siphoning Cash into Property

- Excessive Wages
- Perks
- Nepotism
- Their Fabricated Tithing Doctrine
- The Carrot and the Stick
- Summary

Why you should read this article

- You will discover the secret techniques that certain pastors use to transfer money out of your pocket and into theirs.
- You will understand the overall pattern behind their tricks.
- You will learn enough to protect your friends and family.
- You could gain thousands of dollars (or pounds or euros), literally. Reading this article can set you free. Free to keep more of the money that you have worked hard for. Money you can take and invest in genuine works of God, or in toys for your kids, or perhaps something shiny for your spouse.

Finally, reading this article can help you please God more, since you will no longer be investing in ungodly works.

Introduction

Like Judas reaching into the money bag, the sad reality is that a small minority of Christian pastors steal from God's people. As Christians we hate to face this truth, but I believe we must, because it is our duty to protect our less aware brothers and sisters – keeping them from these thieves.

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. – 2 Corinthians 2:17a

Here exposed are the secret techniques used to fleece money from God's people. Don't be naive thinking that these schemes have spread throughout the world by accident. These techniques are talked about and shared behind closed doors by the clique of pastors who employ them.

It's big business. Some of them laugh at us like con-men laughing at their marks. Seriously, if you don't believe that there are men like that, then watch the 1972 documentary Marjoe. You'll soon realize that these wolves in sheep's clothing have been a blight on Christianity throughout its history.

I will start by outlining the primary pattern that underpins these modern schemes. Then I will drill down, listing each technique one by one, exposing how they work. Finally, at the end, I will outline the biggest monetary scam of all.

First let's discover the primary pattern behind their methods...

The Multilevel Marketing Pattern

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" -John 2:13-16

We've all been approached at some time by a friend caught up in the hope of multilevel marketing. The business they are pushing is simple, sell toothpaste or web sites or whatever, and then recruit people

under you doing the same, taking a cut from their sales. Soon you will be so rich that you can buy a flash European car and give stacks of money to Godly causes.

That is the dream. The proof the dream works is embodied in the wealth of the dream's leaders. Do you see how rich our leaders are? They made all their money by following the dream, proving that you can too. Except, that it's a lie.

Coming up is the key to the pattern, are you ready? These leaders did not become wealthy by following the dream, instead they became wealthy by building up a group of people who believe passionately in the dream, and then selling dream-promoting wares to this captive audience.

I will say it again, because you need to understand this pattern. They did not become rich by selling toothpaste; they became rich by hyping dream-promoting books, tapes, DVDs, and conferences to their own private market of dream believers.

This same pattern is practiced by some Christian leaders and their churches. The dream is the prosperity gospel. Their captive market is their congregation. The products are, well you guessed it: books, tapes, DVDs, and conferences, and t-shirts, and most ominously spiritual rewards and the prevention of spiritual punishments.

These leaders use their faked "success" to promote a distorted gospel which basically says: "tow the line obeying the leaders buying whatever we tell you to buy, and donate money whenever we tell you to donate, and then God will pour riches into your life." They tell us that they became successful by following this dream, but in reality they became rich by sucking money out of those caught up in the buzzing environment where this distorted gospel seems real.

Let's drill in and discuss some of the products and techniques they use to line their pockets with money that ought to have stayed with God's people or gone to legitimate good works. You are about to discover how these spiritual vampires feed...

Tip: A clue that you are caught up in one of these churches is if you hear things like, "This is your spiritual home, you can't go to another church. You must be loyal." They are very jealous about protecting their market, and do not want to lose one of their paying customers to another church. Some even try to prevent their patrons leaving by making them sign contracts or "covenants", like a mobile phone company locking you into a two year term. But the Bible does not teach that Christians are bound to their local church organization, this idea is foreign to Scripture.

Books

The first product is the leader's book (often ghostwritten and fraudulently claimed to be authored by the leader). Let's be honest, many of these books are below par. Like bad business books they have one good idea, if that, and then are padded with motivational sayings and anecdotal stories of how the leader obeyed the dream and so God hosed him down with wealth. The theological content is basically non-existent. These books would tank on Amazon or in a real bookstore, but hyped to their captive market they sell like hot cakes.

Your Counter Strategy: Buy the book if it's got good reviews or if your friends have read it and liked it. In other words treat it like you would any other book. Avoid buying it if the pastor or speaker has hyped it during his talk and especially if there is a lot of peer pressure from the group to buy. Be aware that conferences and seminars are designed to emotionally hype these products. If you've ever been to a high pressure time-share sales session, then you will know what it's like. If you're feeling the hype, then cool off for a few days, buying the book later if you still want to.

DVDs

Next comes the ever popular DVD. Most of which are videos of the leader preaching in his church on a

certain topic. Let me ask you a question, is it ethical for a leader who has been paid by his church to prepare and deliver a sermon, to then take that performance and sell it back to his own church members for a healthy profit? I'm not talking here about paying for reproduction costs or the money going into church funds. I'm talking about DVDs being sold at the same cost as a movie DVD and the profit going into the leader's own pocket.

And like the books most of these DVD's are awful, not worth the money paid. Minimal content with gallons of fluff. Some are so bad that my friends and I have been in hysterics, like the preacher whose proofs for his latest invented doctrine is to slap the bible he's carrying and say, "It's bible, it's bible!"

But, these DVDs are hyped and hyped, and the captive audience buy stacks of them. In the worst money hungry churches you're expected to buy them, and it is noticed if you don't.

Your Counter Strategy: The same as for a hyped book. Is it good? Do you still want the DVD after the hype has dissipated? Then buy it, otherwise save your money.

Hyped Conferences

The hype for these conferences start months before hand. Other church members look at you strangely if you are thinking about not going. What, you can't afford the huge entry fee? What's wrong with you, don't you love God? Don't you want to be blessed? Don't you want to be successful and wealthy? Don't you want to be part of us? Because you won't be, unless you go to THE CONFERENCE!

Each speaker is completely amazing. The next best thing to the second coming.

He's built a church up from nothing to one with thousands of people. She's the most Godly woman in the universe who is the best wife ever with the best kids and the best lifestyle, and she's the pastor's wife too. He's from overseas. She's a corporate CEO. Wow. It's going to be awesome. It's going to be triple awesome! It's going to be mega massive triply awesomely awesome!

The spiritual reward for going is implied to be life changing. The conference fee is nothing, compared to the fire-fighting-bomber worth of blessings and wealth God will dump on your head from upon high.

And Jesus had conferences too, don't forget, like the Sermon on the Mount, where He charged, oh, he didn't charge anything for that spiritual teaching. In fact it was free wasn't it? Hmmm. Well, often the first-movers can't figure out how to monetize their success, we can't blame Jesus for that, can we? Gosh, if only He had some books to sell at the back...

Understand, I'm not against conferences. I'm against overly expensive hyped conferences that deliver hardly any lasting value to their attendees; Conferences that are linked to your standing in your church, and supposedly what God thinks of your commitment to Him.

And why are they so expensive? Where does all that money go? Well, in the next section you're going to find out...

Your Counter Strategy: Hire a hotel room, and sit there reading your Bible with a few Christian friends – trust me, spiritually you'll get more out of it and it'll cost less. Realize that you don't need the sugar high of a conference to get closer to God. De-program yourself from the idea that conferences are like a spiritual hot-point you just have to be at. See the hype for what it is. Be led by the Spirit to conferences, not pulled by the fear of losing your church friends and God's blessing.

The Christian Speaking Circuit

If you have a big market (congregation) and are willing to let others come and sell there, then your fellow pastors will invite you to come and sell into their markets (congregations) too. The bigger your own market, the larger the markets that will open their doors to you – as long as you are willing to reciprocate. Quid pro

quo.

There is a Christian speaking circuit, just like there is a motivational speaking circuit. The circuit has no formal structure like say a football league, but rather is like an exclusive network or an old boys club.

Young speaking-cubs sweat blood to be allowed into the circuit. These wannabes practice hard and desperately seek in-circuit patrons because the financial rewards are significant. Revenue flows in four ways: from sales of products, from special “love offerings” taken for the speaker, from various perks, and from the formal payments (honorariums) for speaking.

Not all visiting church speakers are on the circuit, the difference is in the amount of money their visit extracts. There is nothing wrong with a speaker’s flights and accommodation being paid for, along with the speaker receiving a fair payment for his time. But if the amounts are excessive and the perks extravagant, then that is an unacceptable waste of the Lord’s money.

Some speaker’s egos are so ripe that they demand business or first class flights, expensive chauffeured cars, five star hotel accommodation, gourmet dining, and the right to bring a small entourage along with them (at the church’s expense). Their fees can be enough to buy a family car, and then they have the audacity to expect a special “love offering” to be made for them. The sales of their books and DVD’s are carefully planned, and the hosting pastors are expected to hype their products.

Of course the hosting pastor will then get the same treatment later at the visiting speaker’s church, including his own big fat love offering. If the visiting speaker does not have a church, then the hosting pastor will expect a cut from the speaker’s product sales.

These Sunday service speaking engagements are the bread and butter, to the glamour and super-liquidity of the hyped conferences. Only the true speaking-circuit superstars get to keynote at these hype-fests. The speakers at these conferences are like sharks in a feeding frenzy, seeking to boost their profit margins with the over inflated prices of their products. Their speaking fees and perks are why these conferences cost so much, and can sometimes even run at a, ahem, cough, “loss”.

It is unbelievable what some of these speakers expect from the Body of Christ. I would not like to be in their shoes when they finally meet our Lord, or for that matter anywhere within the blast radius.

Your Counter Strategy: Don’t go to these conferences. Demand transparent accounting to the whole church of all costs of visiting speakers, and for that matter transparency about any income your pastor is earning while speaking at other churches and conferences. No pastor earning reasonable fees from away engagements would have a problem with this, assuming of course he is on leave when he speaks and not double dipping.

Pastor Owned Businesses that Feed Off the Flock

Another way bad pastors extract money from their captive market is to set up a business, and then get their congregation to patronize their business.

Businesses like: bookshops, counseling, gyms, production firms, computer consulting, cinemas, business coaching services, supermarkets, building firms, music festivals, music studios, real-estate firms, and many more. The bookshop is the most common, often located inside the church itself.

Members in the church who show loyalty to their pastor’s businesses are rewarded, often with increased standing in the church. Members who refuse to use the pastor’s businesses are frowned upon.

Your Counter Strategy: Don’t frequent these types of businesses. Ask questions about who owns them, and where their customers are from, if eighty percent or more of the customers come from the pastor’s church then that indicates where its marketing is targeted.

The Honor The Pastor Scam

Money focused churches tend to be run on cultic patterns. One of these cultic patterns is the division of the church into exclusive rings: the all-powerful pastor perched at the center, the inner-ring of sycophants around him consisting of the pastor's lieutenants and the church's privileged class (the rich, the famous and the very pretty), and the outer-ring of the ordinary folk who would love to be in the inner-ring, but are not.

The power of those in the inner-ring is determined by the amount of favor the pastor bestows upon them.

To get more favor the inner-ring will employ many favor-carrying measures, one of which is a scam called "Honoring the Pastor". It works this way, the inner-ring will figure out what the pastor would like, say for his birthday. Then the inner-ringers will squeeze the outer-ringers for the money to buy this item.

Using this method pastors have been "given": diamond rings for their wives, cash gifts, jet skis, luxury cruises, motorbikes, cars, holidays, boats, and a myriad of other expensive luxury items.

Are the pastors complicit in this game? Of course they are. They couldn't demand the gift openly themselves, but seek plausible deniability by having their inner-ring lieutenants do the work. Of course they could refuse the gift when it is presented, and make it clear that they don't want the Lord's money spent on such things again, but they never do. These pastors exchange their favor, for cash from their congregation.

Your Counter Strategy: Unless it's something reasonable like a bunch of flowers for the pastor's wife, don't give to this sort of fund raising.

High Pressure Offerings

Another way the pastor uses his inner-ring to extract cash, is via high pressure offering talks in the church services.

One of the church's inner-ring will take the Sunday offering, which in these money focused churches can turn into a mini-sermon. These inner-ring members are competing against each other's past high scores. At stake is their standing with the pastor and hence their standing in the church. If they rake in the cash then their position is secure, but if they score low then no matter what excuses they have they know the pastor will blame them.

In the extreme money focused churches it is made known who gave the most and who gave the least, and in these churches the giving will not be in secret but people will be expected to come up the front so that everyone can see how much they give. Or people will be watched to see if they put anything in the offering container as it is passed down the aisles.

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. – 2 Corinthians 9:7

Your Counter Strategy: If you feel you are being compelled to give then don't give a penny, no matter how much pressure is applied.

Cathedral Building Wars

Like the cathedral building wars in the middle ages where cities and countries vied against each other to build the most impressive cathedral. The pastors of these money focused churches fight to own the most impressive church to top their rival pastors – their egos demand that they are the king of the heap.

The most impressive churches require the most magnificent buildings, the most professional entertainment in their services, the best church programs, and the best conferences, the best websites, the best radio

and TV programs, and the most members. All this costs a lot of money.

And just like in the days of old these self anointed church kings seek to tax their subjects to fund their private war.

Understand that these cultic churches ultimately exist to serve their pastor's insecure egos, and their congregation suffer under their madness. This type of church culture breeds a harsh environment where people are discarded as soon as they are no longer useful. This is a dysfunctional ethos entirely alien to that of Jesus's teachings.

Your Counter Strategy: Don't help fund these monuments to the pastor's pride and prestige, these pet projects, these grandiose visions. Realize that these churches are not focused on Jesus, but are centered around the narcissistic pastor and what he desires most. Don't be part of this game. Surely we are accountable to God to how we spend our money. Surely then it is our duty as Christians to give that money to true Godly works that bear real fruit for the Kingdom.

Siphoning Cash into Property

Is it ethical for the pastor (or his company or trust) to own property that the church is paying for? Of course not.

Another variation on this scam is the church trust being controlled by the pastor and his family, so they control both the church's cash and property.

Some of these pastors are very clever in how they hide the money trail. But ultimately if church money is paying for an asset the pastor owns, except via his wages of course, then it is almost certainly wrong. Imagine the furor if a politician was caught siphoning off government money into property or assets owned by himself.

Your Counter Strategy: Check who owns your church's property. If it is a trust or company then find out who owns and controls that entity. Then look at what your pastor owns directly or indirectly, and who is paying for those assets. Stop giving to that church until any unethical dealings like these are stopped and the money repaid.

Excessive Wages

The Bible teaches that the spiritual worker deserves to be paid:

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." – 1 Timothy 5:17-18

I believe it is reasonable to assume that Paul the Apostle meant only fair wages, not excessive wages, and that Paul would have agreed with what Peter the Apostle wrote:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. – 1 Peter 5:1-3

Obviously one of the ways greedy pastors can extract money from God's people is via excessive wages. The amount of which they will often decide themselves, or have conferred on them by their sycophants (via the church board, or the church wages review committee, for example).

No honest pastor would have a problem with his congregation knowing how much their church pays him, or at least what range his wage fell in, like say "between \$50,000 and \$60,000". This is normal. Openness

regarding the pastor's stipend has been a practice of the Christian church for hundreds of years, and continues today. Only those pastors who have an excessive wage would be reluctant to let the amount become public knowledge.

If your pastor refuses to be open about his wage then be very suspicious. It is likely he knows that the amount would be considered excessive. If it is excessive, then watch him dodge the issue like a sweaty politician.

Be even more suspicious whenever you hear a pastor's wage being justified by comparing him to a CEO. If you hear this CEO nonsense then you can instantly know two things: first, the pastor's wage is massive; second, you are being scammed. A pastor is not a CEO no matter how big his church empire is; a CEO runs a for monetary-profit organization, a pastor serves the people of God – they are not the same thing.

By the way, if the pastor claims to be a CEO, then you must be a shareholder. Shareholders have full rights to the accounts, including how much their "CEO" is earning.

Your Counter Strategy: Find out how much your pastor is paid. If he will not reveal the information then stop giving to that church until it is revealed. Especially stop if you hear any of this "CEO" rubbish.

Perks

Expensive leased cars, holidays, clothing allowances, spending money, restaurant meals, hotels, flights, and expense accounts, are some of the perks demanded by these luxury smitten pastors.

Some say that if they are preaching the "prosperity gospel", then they have to appear prosperous to "walk their talk". But of course that is a deception. They are using God's money to misrepresent how wealthy they are, to help prove their false teaching works. Despicable.

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. – 2 Corinthians 4:2

What is worse, many of these churches make their members complicit in this deception. Members are instructed to wear expensive clothes and groom themselves in the manner expected of the rich. They are encouraged to buy (or lease) the most impressive car they can afford. Members are required to appear happy and successful. The excuse given is that the appearance of success breeds success, but this is nonsense, more likely it breeds significant debt. The real reason the leaders want their church members to appear successful is to trick others into thinking that the prosperity dream that they preach really works.

Your Counter Strategy: Stop giving money in protest, until the excessive perks are removed. Ignore any pressure to live beyond your means.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. – 1 Timothy 6:3-10

Nepotism

A church isn't a family business you know; it is a family, but it's not a business.

Are the pastor's relatives high up in the church? Are they the ones with the most powerful positions? Then that is nepotism. A good church will choose the very best people for the job, while a bad church will reward those closest to the pastor with the lucrative positions of power.

If you see nepotism, then that is a sign that something is very wrong.

Your Counter Strategy: Yup, you guessed it – stop giving to that church until the pastor’s little family fiefdom is disassembled.

Their Fabricated Tithing Doctrine

This is the big daddy. This is their sacred cow. This is the beating heart of their evil empire. The crown jewel. The Death Star. The one ring to bill them all. The pot of gold. Their matrix (into which they want to plug you). Their Wizard of Oz. Their magic spell. Their special power. Their secret recipe with the eleven herbs and spices. Their Golden Goose. The very air upon which they breathe!

Question this doctrine and watch these money hungry pastors bare their fangs. This is a teaching that they will bear no compromise on. Tithing, or at least their own version of tithing, is their one true love.

Here are some bullet points about tithing that these money hungry pastors don’t want you to know:

- The New Testament Church did not tithe.
- The New Testament does not teach tithing for Christians.
- Their favorite Malachi verses cannot be used for Christians since Christians are not under the law of Moses.
- Abraham’s one off tithe of his war booty did not set up a precedent for Christians to regularly tithe their income.
- The version of tithing they teach cannot be found in Scripture (see below).
- The “Storehouse” in Malachi cannot be equated to your local church organization.
- There are plenty of rich (money wise) Christians who do not tithe. This would be impossible if their version of tithing was true.
- The New Testament teaching is that you decide how much to give, and there are no rules about where it goes. You cannot be compelled to give.

It may come as a surprise to learn that their tithing doctrine is a combination of twisted scriptures and wishful thinking, as opposed to solid Biblical exegesis reflecting a central thrust of New Testament teaching. Here is their tithing doctrine stated in a nutshell:

“Christians must give ten percent of their gross income only to their church organization. If they do, then God will bless them for any offerings they make to the church organization beyond this ten percent. But if they do not give ten percent gross, then they are stealing from God and God will curse them.”

There are variations of this teaching, and sometimes it is called a “principle”, but the above definition contains the core essence of this doctrine.

It is vital to grasp that tithing is not for Christians. Tithing was part of the old law (of Moses) which was fulfilled (completed) by Jesus. You know that Christians are not under the law of Moses don’t you?

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. – Romans 7:6

know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. – Galatians 2:16

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” – Galatians 3:10

New wine should not be put into old wine skins, nor should new unshrunk cloth be used to patch an old

garment; if you think you need to obey the law of tithing then you need to obey the whole law (or you will be cursed, Galatians 3:10).

What is more, this tithing doctrine they teach isn't found in either the New or Old Testament. Tithing in the old testament does not match what these pastors preach – this unique tithe teaching is of their own invention.

This is such an important subject that Cultwatch has a special website TithingDebate.com dedicated to setting Christians free from this fake doctrine. There are free books to download and articles to read. Make sure you read our article "Should you give? New Testament Giving Supported!", because Cultwatch is not anti-giving. If you think tithing is for Christians today, then you need to read TithingDebate.com

Tip: If you are struggling to feed your family or buy them clothes, then understand that you do not need to give to the church. You can still do so if you choose, but you should not feel under compulsion since your family is more important. Also understand that if you are poor then that does not mean God is cursing you, or that you have done something wrong; this is an erroneous teaching these greedy men promote to guilt you into giving. Remember, your duty is to your family first. If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. – 1 Timothy 5:8

Tip: Churches that push this erroneous tithing doctrine will often try to enforce tithing via written agreements (called covenants), and also by monitoring what people give (so they can compel them to give more if they are not meeting the ten percent target). First, grasp that these "covenants" are illegitimate and not worth the paper they are printed on, because they contain false doctrine (like tithing) and set up the pastors as a false authority over you. God would not be party to a covenant that contains falsehoods, therefore God was not party to the covenant you were pressured to sign, therefore you are free from this burden. It is as if you never signed it. Second, recording what you give and using that information to pressure you to give more is wrong, the Bible implies that our giving is best done in secret so that only we and God know what we gave. Don't go to a church where they monitor what you give. (note: some churches voluntarily let you record what you have given via a numbered envelope system for tax purposes. Done correctly, no one in the church will know what you gave. There is nothing wrong with this kind of recording.)

Your Counter Strategy: Stop giving to that church until they change their ways. That doesn't mean to stop giving to Godly works, we would encourage you to give as the Holy Spirit prompts you and as you decide. But it is valid to protest false doctrine by refusing to fund the system that promotes that false doctrine.

The Carrot and the Stick

These pastors are not only money hungry, but often power hungry too. They want to be both pastor and master. They commit the sin of the Pharisees and appoint themselves as middle men between God and you. They seek to replace the Holy Spirit in your life. They "lord it over" their flocks. Read Cultwatch's articles on the "Super Apostles" here if you want to find out more.

Using the connection they claim to have with God they threaten you with the stick of spiritual curses if you disobey them, and dangle the carrot of spiritual blessings if you comply. They seek to dominate your life; often implying that they have say in where you work, where you fellowship, who you marry, and of course, when, where, and how much you should give.

This is a false spiritual authority not supported by Scripture. In fact I believe it to be quite devilish (the desire to control and dominate others).

In these pastor's prosperity teaching, obeying the pastor and giving money are the two pillars necessary for a successful Christian life. If you sit back and think about it, you will quickly see what a con it is.

These men want to be at the head of everything, they want to dominate you, they want to be seen as the big man, and some even secretly desire adoration (almost worship). This is the opposite of true Christian

leadership:

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. – Luke 22:24-27

I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to Corinth. Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm. – 2 Corinthians 1:23-24

Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. – Mark 10:42-44

Threatening people with curses if they do not obey or donate is spiritual extortion. It is contrary to the nature of grace and the person of Jesus.

Your Counter Strategy: Don't be afraid of these men. Ignore their bluster. Grow a backbone and stand up to them. And if you give, then give to honor God and not out of fear of punishment or greed for financial gain. Memorize this verse: Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. – 2 Corinthians 9:7

Summary

I believe many churchgoers would be shocked if they could comprehend the real attitude their pastor has towards them. From my experience with both the cults and these money-focused churches, it is my impression that instead of being looked upon with love, these pastors see their congregation as farm animals to be milked.

It is my prayer that this article will set you free from this kind of spiritual bondage. I hope now you will be able to spot this counterfeit Christian life and be able to transition into a closer walk with Jesus; a walk built on love, trust and grace, not fear.

To summarize what we have learnt about the methods money-hungry pastors use to feed off their flock: We discovered the multilevel marketing pattern that these often ex-salesmen (not theologians) model their churches. We examined some of the products they sell into their captive market like books and DVDs. We unhyped the hyped conferences, and exposed the Christian speaking circuit. Next we talked about how spiritually dishonest pastors set up their own businesses that their followers are expected to patronize. After that came the scam of "honoring the pastor" with gifts of luxury items. We delved into the high-pressure offering mini-sermons that are designed to guilt people into giving. We examined how most of the money gained is used to build the pastor's modern-day cathedrals, projects that their fragile egos demand. We exposed the scam of siphoning the church's cash into properties and assets owned by the pastor. We covered the obvious points of excessive wages and extravagant perks, and that was followed by the not-so-obvious problem of nepotism. Their big daddy came second to last – their fabricated tithing doctrine was exposed for what it is, a fraud. Finally we discussed the spiritual carrot and stick of the false authority that the pastors claim.

There are other methods these guys use to extract money from churches. Revisit this article regularly to discover these methods in future updates.

Realize that a number of churches follow the patterns that this article exposes. However, there are many good churches who do not practice these methods. If you have been hurt by these practices, then feel free to give up on these twisted money-focused environments, but please do not give up on Jesus.

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. – 2 Corinthians 2:17. Therefore, can we conclude that men who peddle the word of God for profit are not sent from God?

Feel free to think this one through for yourself.

Please link to this article, and email the link to your friends and family. Help us get the word out there.