

The worker deserves his wages

Many of us have worked hard and received little compensation for our work. Some work seven full days a week for hardly a liveable wage. Others have to fight with their employers to just get their wages from them. If we have people working for us, we need to pay them what they deserve. If we can't pay them, don't employ them. What we do is employ someone for what we can afford to pay a decent wage for the day rather than employ them for a longer time on a much lower wage. Questions to ask ourselves are, "Is it a liveable wage?" and "Would I be willing to work for that wage?"

1 Corinthians 9:1-14 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? ² If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³ This is my defence to those who would examine me. ⁴ Do we not have the right to eat and drink? ⁵ Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶ Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? ⁷ Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

⁸ Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? ⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰ Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹² If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

¹³ Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴ In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

1) A wage earned

- In Matthew 20: 1 – 16 Jesus told a parable of a landowner hiring workers to work in his vineyard. He went out throughout the day hiring workers until about five in the afternoon. He then paid them the same as those who had been working all day.
 - This seemed to be unfair to those who had been working all day. The fact is that life isn't fair.
 - They had agreed to work for a denarius for the day's work. They weren't being cheated on their wages.
 - The emphasis is on the generosity of God
 - Matthew 20:13-15 "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'"
 - Accept what you had agreed on without comparing yourself to others.
- When you work for someone, you can and must expect to be paid for the work you've done as you deserve your wages.
- And when someone works for you, make sure that you pay the person their worth without making them beg for their payment.
 - Deuteronomy 24:14-15 Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.
- The Lord, through James, gives a stern warning to those who withhold the wages of those who worked for them
 - James 5:1-4 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

2) The Christian worker and payment

- 1 Timothy 5:17-18 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The labourer deserves his wages."
 - The word translated as "honour" means "price" as money paid. Thus the Christian worker can expect payment for their service to the church.
- Paul talks about the rights of Christian workers to get paid using the examples of soldiers, vineyard workers, and shepherds.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?
- Both to the church in Corinth and to Timothy he reiterates the law from Deuteronomy: "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain"
 - At that time they used oxen to walk over the grain to break the hard outer husk to separate the edible kernels from the husks. Muzzling the ox would prevent it from eating the grain. The law forbade this practice to allow the ox to eat and be nourished while it was working.
 - 1 Corinthians 9:9-12 Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?
 - 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

3) The attitude of the Christian worker receiving payment

- The Christian worker recognizes that what He does is by the grace of God, the calling of God, and for the Lord, and so does it with the attitude that pleases the Lord.
 - Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.
- The Christian worker doesn't put an unnecessary burden on those he's serving.
 - 2 Thessalonians 3:7-10 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.
- The Christian worker must not be greedy and use the work of the Gospel for personal gain.
 - 2 Corinthians 2:17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

In conclusion: Christian workers should be paid a reasonable wage according to what the church can afford. The Christian worker must not expect more than the church can afford, not be greedy, and be willing to supplement his income with other work.