

## Lesson 6 – The Sponsoring Church Arrangement

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**Introduction:** We need to be very careful when we consider how we use the collection.

A. Paul went to great lengths to explain how brethren handle and use the contribution.

1. Paul explained what the money was used for. **(1 Cor 16:1; Rom 15:25-27)**
2. He further had each church understand how the money was to be transported. **(1 Cor 16:3-4)**
3. Paul wanted all things to be transparent and honorable. **(2 Cor 8:20-21)**

B. This study is an extension of our study of the organization of the church.

1. How many of you have heard of “the sponsoring church arrangement?”
2. The closest term like this in a Bible lexicon is “sponge.” However, brethren refer to this concept in how one church can send money to another church.

### ***I. The universal church has no organization through which it may function***

A. The only organization God gave is the local church. **(Acts 14:23; 1 Pt 5:1-2)**

1. Many in history have tried to make a universal organization for the church.
2. Some created man-made organizations to carry out this work.
3. When there is a concentration of money and power, regardless of the motives and good men involved, there will be very predicable consequences over time.
4. Bible Colleges, missionary societies, benevolent organizations and publishing houses are the kinds of organization that have sought money from churches.
5. If we stay within what is authorized then we will not be tempted in this area!

B. Many who once opposed church support of these organizations changed their opposition when the human organization was placed under a local church.

1. We will examine the passages that deal with one church sending money to another church. We will take all the Bible says on this subject.
2. Whatever these passages authorize is the realm in which we will act!

### ***II. What does the Bible teach about one church sending money to another church?***

A. Agabus and other prophets told churches to prepare for a great famine that would affect the church in Jerusalem. **(Acts 11:27-30)**

1. This money was sent to the elders in Jerusalem. What church are Elders responsible for? What members are they responsible for? **(1 Pt 5:1-2)**
2. Since the money was sent to relieve the need of a famine, what kind of things would a local church do? **(Acts 6:2-3)**
3. If a local church had needy members then it was the unique responsibility of that church to help them. What if the ability of brethren locally could not meet the need?
4. This need was not randomly assumed!

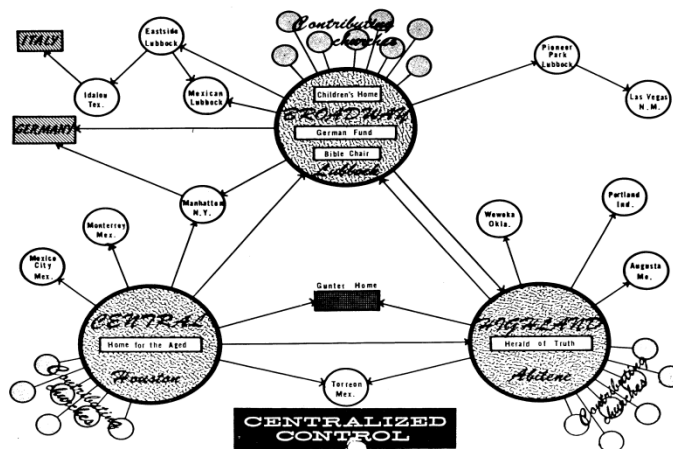
B. Paul had the churches of Galatia and Macedonia take up collections for the needy saints in Jerusalem. **(1 Cor 16:1; 2 Cor 8:1, 4)**

1. Again this was sent to a church so that it could take care of a need that was its unique responsibility. It was not “assumed.”
2. This was an appeal to churches that had an “abundance” to help a church that lacked (burdened). **(2 Cor 8:11-15)**
3. This was a temporary situation and not a permanent one. The roles could one day be reversed.

4. We have clear authority to do this in benevolent situations. Could “need” be defined in other areas? If so, how?

### **III. How do brethren define and use the sponsoring church arrangement?**

- A. Some brethren see where the Bible allows for one church to send money to another church and then make several assumptions not found in these verses.
  1. They say that one church can “assume” a work greater than its ability to fulfil.
  2. They then say that other churches can be called on to help them.
  3. The need is always present if they keep assuming a work greater than their ability.
  4. There may be no end to this arrangement.
- B. This became a divisive issue in the 1950’s when the Herold of Truth TV and Radio program was assumed by the 5<sup>th</sup> and Highland church in Abilene, Texas.
  1. After world war two there was a church that assumed the right to evangelize the whole of Germany!
  2. Small churches were now sending money to very large capable churches.
  3. Some of these churches began sending out “messengers” (recruiters) that had impact upon local churches. Some local preachers were fired because of this!
  4. Consider this graphic picture of how absurd these arrangements became. One brother called this “the money in orbit” chart. Where might your money end up?



### **IV. There are limiting circumstances where a church might send money to another church**

- A. The need is never assumed, rather it is a God given responsibility. This is clearly defined in benevolence. **(2 Cor 8:11-15)**
  1. In evangelism there is always a greater need than ability! How can one church assume they are needier than another?
  2. What would you tell a Christian that assumed a greater responsibility to give in the contribution? What if they asked you to give to them to meet that need?
- B. This arrangement is temporary and not permanent!
- C. The very same problems and consequences occur that happen with human institutions such as the missionary society of the 1800’s.

**Conclusion:** God's organization is sufficient to do God's work.

- A. Let us recognize His wisdom and be busy in His work.
- B. Let us not be ashamed of God's ways.