

EMPOWERED

**A Biblical Approach
to Building a Ministry Support Team**

- Ken Eichler -

All scripture references used in this booklet are based
on the
NAS95 version of the Bible

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Purpose of the Booklet

If you are reading this booklet right now, chances are you're a seasoned pastor desiring to finish well in ministry, make a greater impact on the Body of Christ than what you've done in the past, and bring in some income because your church didn't provide you with a retirement program that can meet your current or future financial obligations. I am excited that you are considering partnering with Standing Stone Ministry and helping us care for pastors at risk of leaving the ministry prematurely. If you are still very passionate about ministry, but you can't keep working the 50 – 60 hours a week demanded of most pastors, this might be the very ministry vehicle God has brought to your attention.

The Church is facing a crisis few are aware of - *1,700 to 1,800 pastors are leaving the ministry every month in the United States alone*. The top two reasons are ministry burnout and marital issues, often leading to divorce. Think of the challenges you faced over your ministry career; the feelings of isolation, lack of appreciation, fatigue, disappointment, and stressful relational and financial struggles to name a few. How many times did you ask yourself, "Is it really worth it?" You know the price your family paid for being in a public *fishbowl* 24/7. Were there times when your spouse was

judged for the car she drove, the clothes she wore, and the way your children acted in public? Marriage is hard enough without being subjected to the criticisms and unreal expectations placed on a pastor's family by church members.

Some of you might not have entered full-time vocational ministry if you had known the challenges you and your family would face. It would have been extremely helpful to have had someone come alongside and encourage you when facing such struggles. That's exactly why we need seasoned pastors to build mentoring relationships with our younger pastors in ministry today. Statistics tell us that up to *81% of pastors do not have a mentor or close friend they feel safe enough with to share their personal issues or struggles*. Your talent, wisdom, and experience have positioned you to make a significant impact on our pastors and the communities they serve. By caring for these ministry leaders and providing a safe and supporting environment for them to overcome the problems driving them out of ministry, you could be the very answer to many of their prayers!

After 40 years of pastoral experience and as a mentor to pastors struggling to carry out their ministry calling, God has prepared and called me to assemble a team of Associates who will partner with me in encouraging and caring for pastors across the country and abroad. Little did I know that by accepting the position of Director of

Ministry for Standing Stone, I would have to change my thinking on how God would meet my family's financial needs.

One would assume that Standing Stone would provide their Director of Ministry a good salary for working in such an important position, but that assumption would be wrong. God made it very clear to me that I was not to receive a salary from the ministry, but I was to build a ministry support team to allow me to be fully funded and available to do *anything* asked of me by God. Initially, I questioned whether I had *really* heard from God or was experiencing temporary insanity. However, it became increasingly clear that the former was correct. Besides, how could I ask others (Associates) to do something I was not willing to do personally? I have lived my life with a philosophy that a leader leads by example – leaders should never ask someone to do something they wouldn't do, or haven't done. Especially a Christian leader – we should always lead by example!

Personal Struggle and Stronghold

But here was my dilemma. I had a stronghold in my life. It was a stronghold that kept me from asking others to financially support me as I fulfilled my ministry calling. It was a stronghold created out of pain, distortions, lies, fear, and pride.

The beginning stages of this stronghold began when I was nine-years-old. My father had just committed armed robbery, taking \$54.00 from a movie theater by gunpoint. My life, along with my two older brothers and two younger sisters, was drastically changed as we were thrown into a life dependent upon the social welfare net provided by the county government. I remember standing in line to receive our box of beans, rice, powdered milk, powdered eggs (very gross), and something they called *processed cheese*. I remember seeing the way people looked at us as they passed by on the street. I can remember thinking “I don’t belong in this line – I am not a beggar!” It was even harder at school. At that time, the lunch line was divided into two groups of students; those who had money to buy their lunches and those who were too poor and received a free lunch. Kids can be so cruel. Many of my classmates would say mean and hurtful things as we stood in that humiliating line. Every day at school a reoccurring thought seemed to fill my mind – “I don’t belong in this line – I am not a beggar!”

As a young 20-year-old youth pastor I resisted asking people for financial support for my ministry, even if the financial support of God’s people would enable me to do the things our Lord had called me to do. I see now that the two churches I planted and the one state-wide outreach ministry I founded were adversely affected by

my unhealthy and distorted views on asking for ministry partnership. Planting and pastoring a church is full-time work by itself, but I found myself having to work two or three part-time jobs just to provide for my family (at their detriment) because I wouldn't ask others to financially partner with me until I could draw a salary from the church. I was bound and determined to make sure people knew I wasn't dependent on them for my financial needs – I was going to be successful in fulfilling my calling regardless of what people thought, said, did, or didn't do.

Let's look at the elements of this stronghold in my life. The *first element was my pain* - the pain of having my dad taken away from me and the humiliating words and actions of my classmates. "Why did this happen?" There were no good answers for a nine-year-old child.

The *second element was distortion*. It seems as if our great enemy, Satan, always tries to distort our pain and sow his lies into the fabric of our hearts during those painful times. He certainly succeeded in distorting my understanding of the poor decisions my father made and the intentions of our welfare system, which created a false narrative of desertion along with a general lack of love and acceptance by others.

The *third element is that of lies*. Somehow I began to believe that I didn't need anyone to help me. I was

deceived in thinking that I was smart enough, strong enough, and skilled enough to take care of myself. I even foolishly thought one time that if God didn't provide for me, I would be able to provide for myself. The lies didn't stop there. They morphed into unhealthy thoughts of self-reliance and a critical spirit toward those that would ask for ministry support of others. It didn't help that the media had exposed so many charlatans manipulating people into giving money for selfish gain by using God's Word as a proof text.

The *fourth element was fear*. Regardless of the need, I resisted asking people for financial support. I was so fearful that people would criticize me and equate my motives with selfish gain. I didn't want to take that chance, so I didn't ask. That fear affected the way I spoke to my congregants before receiving God's tithes and offerings on Sunday mornings. How sad that I let my fear in this area taint such an important time of worshipping God through the giving of our gifts and expressing heartfelt appreciation to the One who has given us the gift of eternal life.

This leads to what became the *biggest and most dangerous of the elements creating my stronghold – PRIDE*. Talk about deception. Pride can keep us from hearing and obeying God's voice in our ministry life. God hates pride and arrogance (Prov. 8:13). My distorted pride kept me from teaching God's Word when it came

to ministry support. To protect my unhealthy reputation and character, I missed out on being able to partner with people in accomplishing things I know God called me to do, limiting my effectiveness and scope of work.

That will no longer happen in my life! I feel that my stronghold has been broken. It has been broken by the truth found in God's word (John 8:32); the truth about ministry support proclaimed in scripture. I now feel empowered to ask others to partner with me to accomplish something we cannot do by ourselves. I believe that God wants many who will read this booklet to raise their own ministry support team in order to be *fully funded*. *Fully funded* means having the ability to care for your family's financial needs while going anywhere God wants you to go and doing anything He wants you to do. That is being vision-driven, not vision-limited because of finances. That is being empowered in ministry!

Comparing Ministry Support

If you were planting a church today, what would you ask the people around you to do? I've planted three churches over the years. I asked as many people as I could to give of their time, energy, and treasure to accomplish what God wanted to do in the lives of the people in our community.

- I didn't limit the number of people who helped based on their employment and number of hours they worked each week.
- I didn't limit the amount they gave financially based on their income level.
- I encouraged them to step up and take on things they never thought they could do.
- I explained to them that their investment in the lives of people would result in treasure stored up for them in heaven and how they would share in the eternal blessings of what was accomplished through the church.
- I told them how their service and financial giving would position them to be blessed in other areas of their lives.
- I was excited, happy, joyful, and thankful when they served faithfully and gave willingly to the Lord.

Let's now consider what you would be asking people to do if they joined your ministry support team. You would ask people to give of their time, energy, and treasure to accomplish what God wants to do in the lives of pastors and the people they serve.

- Should you limit the number of people who can help you based on their employment and number of hours they work each week?
- Should you limit the amount they give financially based on their income level?
- Should you encourage them to step up and join you in accomplishing something that is so significant, something so needed, which will result in impacting churches and the communities for generations to come?
- Should you explain to them the treasure they will store-up in heaven because of their partnership with you as you care for ministry leaders and their spouses?
- Should you tell them how their service and financial giving will position them to be blessed in other areas of their lives?
- Would you be excited, happy, joyful, and thankful that they partnered with you in this ministry and gave willingly to the Lord's work?

Of course you would! So what is the difference between asking people to give of their time and resources if you were planting a church or if you were a shepherd of shepherds? Practically speaking, there is none! For those who have planted churches, you know an important key to success is asking people to partner

with you to see something wonderful happen – to see God change the hearts and lives of people. You realized you would never be able to do it all yourself. You had to ask!

For me, I have come to understand the *importance of asking*. James 4:2 states that “we have not because we ask not.” It seemed easier for me to ask for the benefit of the church or other ministries, but it was difficult for me to ask for my own benefit. But the truth is, in both cases, I was asking for *the benefit of God’s work in the lives of people*. It is not about me serving in the church or serving at Standing Stone, but about serving God and obeying His call on my life. When pastoring, the salary I received from the church was definitely earned and directly benefited me and my family. It would be deceptive and hypocritical for me to think that as a pastor I didn’t expect to be paid or benefit from the giving of those who financially supported the church.

If God has called you to become an Associate and partner with Standing Stone Ministry, would you expect to be paid? Of course you would! Would Standing Stone Ministry expect you to be paid? Of course we would! Does God expect you to be paid? Of course He does and it is His responsibility ultimately to provide that income for you. How is God going to provide it? He is going to use people who love Him and hear His voice; who recognize that everything they have belongs to God.

They are the same people who love, respect, and trust you to do what God has called you to do. Now trust Him and prepare your heart to ask – ask in faith so people can respond out of their loving obedience to their God and Savior.

Each of us is responsible for what God puts in our hearts to do! Let's consider God's word together. I hope the following passages of scripture will have the same impact in your heart that they have had in mine – freedom!

Everything Belongs to the Lord

One difficulty pastors have with asking people to support their ministry efforts is a fear that people will feel they are being asked to give something that belongs to them and them alone. It is as if they are trying to take something away from an individual who believes it should remain in his possession.

The truth is *everything in the earth belongs to the King of the earth, the creator of all things*. The psalmist correctly stated in Psalms 24:1 - *"The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it."* The prophet Haggai, when addressing the wealth of all nations and who it belongs to, proclaims God's Word that *'the silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the LORD of hosts (Hag. 2:8)*.

Everything we have was brought into existence by Him one way or the other. Whether it is the land that produces our crops, the strength to work in the field, the wisdom to know when to plant, or the sunshine and rain needed to grow the crops. Those who think that they have produced what they have by their own ability and strength fool themselves. *“You may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth” (Deut. 8:17–18).*

Some have had to learn this lesson the hard way. If you could have a conversation with the most powerful man on the face of the earth during his days, what would King Nebuchadnezzar teach you about the problem with thinking that he acquired his great wealth through his own effort? Consider what is recorded in the book of Daniel. *“The king reflected and said, ‘Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?’ While the word was in the king’s mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize*

that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.’ Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws” (Dan. 4:30-33).

But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation” (v. 34).

At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride (v. 36-37).

If a pagan king can come to this understanding, how much more should God’s children understand by the Spirit that everything we have belongs to God? As

pastors, it is our responsibility to teach this, believe this, and live this!

If that is really the case, then we should be able to go before others with confidence and ask the question; “Does God want you to use what is His, to partner with me to accomplish what He has called me to do?” The responsibility for their answer doesn’t rest on your shoulders; every man will give an account for what he has done with what God has given him. That lesson was clearly taught by Jesus in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30. Your responsibility is to ask. Those you ask will be responsible for their stewardship. God says His responsibility will be to provide for His servants – sounds like a deal to me!

Scriptural Basis for Ministry Support

When God brought the children of Israel into the Promised Land, He created a model of support for those called into full-time ministry work. He told Aaron that the tribe of Levi *“shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel. To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting”* (Num. 18:20-21).

Many Christians today recognize God's leading in their lives and would credit Him for their jobs and possessions. They work full-time to provide for their families and accrue resources that should be used to further the Kingdom of God and support those called into full-time ministry. Pastors are today's Levites for the Body of Christ. They are deserving of the financial support of those who labor in the public and private sectors of our society.

Consider Nehemiah

For those considering becoming Standing Stone Ministry Associates, building a ministry support team requires you asking others if they would like to partner with you in significantly impacting the Body of Christ through strengthening its pastoral leaders. To get them on board, your team will need to know the *what, how, and when* of the task God has placed in your heart. By doing this, you will allow others to hear what God wants to say to them, and it gives them an opportunity to respond to Him. This is what Nehemiah did when he expressed to the king what God had put upon his heart.

And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing

but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?" Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it." Then the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, "How long will your journey be, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me, and I gave him a definite time. And I said to the king, "If it please the king, let letters be given me for the governors of the provinces beyond the River, that they may allow me to pass through until I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress which is by the temple, for the wall of the city and for the house to which I will go." And the king granted them to me because the good hand of my God was on me (Neh. 2:1-8).

Nehemiah didn't have the resources or authority to do anything about the rundown condition of Jerusalem. He was troubled and wanted to do something about it, but he couldn't do it by himself. His willingness to share the need and his burden with the King was all he needed to

do. God put it in the heart of the king to logistically and financially make the rebuilding of Jerusalem happen.

What steps did Nehemiah take?

1. He went to someone he had served and proven his trustworthiness.
2. He shared the burden that God had placed on his heart.
3. He prayed how he should voice his request for help.
4. His request was not a demand, but a request of willing participation – “if it pleases the king” (v. 5, 6, and 7) – only if the king wanted to and only if he had found favor with the king because of his service.
5. He told the king what he would do within an allotted time.

Nehemiah recognized that God would provide the resources and courage to accomplish what he was called to do. He was humble, prepared, patient, specific, and open to how God would provide.

Many of you are Nehemiah to people you have served over your many years of pastoring. You have proven

your trustworthiness. They believe that you will keep your ministry commitments. Fear did not keep Nehemiah from speaking up. He asked and it was given to him. Don't let fear keep you from asking those whom God has placed in your life and wants on your ministry support team to help you accomplish this strategically important task of encouraging and strengthening our pastors.

Consider Jesus

Even though you have taught out of the Gospel of Luke, I would not be surprised to learn that you never really considered the implications of Jesus and his disciples carrying out their ministry with the financial support provided by others. Jesus could have continually performed miracles on a daily basis to provide for their daily needs, but he chose to use others to give toward their ministry. Obviously, one of the main reasons for doing so was to allow others to walk in obedience to God and use the resources God had given them as His stewards for the needs of the ministry.

In the eighth chapter of Luke, it lists several individuals God used to support Jesus and his disciples' ministry. It reads, "Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means" (v.3).

Jesus reinforced the Father's desire to use others to promote the gospel by sending out his disciples to do ministry. He gave them very specific instructions. *"And He said to them, 'Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city'"* (Luke 9:3–4).

Then Jesus sent out seventy more disciples and told them to *"carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house"* (Luke 10:4–7).

Not only is God calling people to full-time ministry, He has made it clear they are worth being paid for their work. Pastors should never be made to feel they are beggars only receiving financial support out of pity. God has called these men and women to a mighty task. They are worth much more than they usually get.

Consider Paul

The Apostle Paul made this very clear by repeating a teaching common in the early church by stating, *"so also*

the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). Paul wrote in his letter of instruction to Timothy that “the Scripture says, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,’ and ‘the laborer is worthy of his wages’” (1 Tim. 5:18).

Some would ask the question, “What about the fact that the Apostle Paul made tents and supported himself and the ministry through his own labor?” If you carefully read the text in 2 Thessalonians, you will see that Paul was addressing a problem with lazy and undisciplined people. He decided to work and make tents providing his needs to model before them a believer that is hard working and productive. He states *“nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; not because we do not have the right to this, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example.”* (2 Thess. 3:8–9).

While establishing the Church at Ephesus, Paul knew it was strategically important that his motives would not be called into question. His ministry was a direct reflection of his servant’s heart. He told them, *“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me”* (Acts 20:33–34). But this

was not always his concern or strategy. Notice that while establishing the church at Corinth – he made tents for a season – then lived on the support of others. He had a multipurpose strategy; be above reproach whenever possible and focus on the ministry work at hand when funds were provided for his needs.

After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18:1–5).

Paul questioned himself, wondering if he made a mistake by not asking for ministry support!

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to

anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so (2 Cor. 11:7–9).

Paul delivers a powerful defense for living on the ministry support of other believers. He explains how appropriate, ethical, and principled it is for ministers to expect compensation for their service.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 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. My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in

hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:1–14 (NASB95)

If you choose to partner with Standing Stone and help pastor pastors, you will have every right to eat and drink (v.4), plow in the hope of sharing the crops (v.10), and rest in the knowledge that God has directed you to get your living from the gospel (v.14).

Ministry Support Team Benefits

Financially supporting someone in ministry blesses many more people than just those who are on the receiving end. Remember, Jesus himself taught that “It is more blessed to give than receive” (Acts 20:35). Do you really believe that? I do! God loves when people cheerfully give to accomplish His purpose in the earth (2 Cor. 9:7). There are tremendous benefits for those who financially give to further the Kingdom of God.

Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, clearly expressed his understanding of the benefits derived from financially supporting ministry workers. He knew that it would be credited to their heavenly account.

You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account (Phil. 4:15–17).

Consider Elijah and the Widow Woman

Sometimes we get a glimpse at how God chooses to bless people who obey his commands to give toward the support of His ministry servants. Just consider the story of Elijah and the widow woman. This story helps us understand the importance of our obedience when God commands us to do things that don't make a lot of sense. Remember, His ways are not our ways – His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9)! Why would God send Elijah to a poor widow woman to receive support from her? People in our society today would look at Elijah with disgust, criticizing and judging him for being so selfish and insensitive to her plight. Think about the likelihood of what people thought or said concerning Elijah and this woman. How dare this man

take advantage of this poor woman! He was able to work. Why was he sponging off her? If Elijah was a man-pleaser, he would have struggled to endure the criticism that others surely levied against him. But Elijah was a pleaser of God and his obedience produced real benefits to this woman God loved so dearly.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.' " So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her

household ate for many days. The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah. Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!" He said to her, "Give me your son." Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed. He called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him." The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." (1 Kings 17:8–23).

Scripture gives no reason why Elijah didn't use his own strength and ability to support himself. It wasn't about self-ability, it was about obedience. God commanded a poor woman (v.9), not a rich woman or man to meet his

needs. Why? Again, scripture doesn't specify the reason, but we can see the tremendous benefit to the woman. Her commitment to obey God's command to care for the needs of this prophet resulted in the ongoing miracle of the flour and oil supply never being exhausted during that season in her life (v. 16).

Consider what God was doing in this woman's heart. Could He have been encouraging her and building up her self-worth? Could He have been inspiring her to look to Him and not to men to care for her? Could He have been stretching her faith and demonstrating His faithfulness to those who will seek Him first? God had an ongoing plan to bless this woman. If she would have been disobedient and not supplied the needs of the prophet, she would have missed the blessing the ministry servant provided when she faced the death of her son. If the prophet had not been there to pray, her son would not have been raised from the dead. Think of the ongoing blessing of that miracle which produced hope and confidence in her heart and faith in the hearts of those who heard that story.

Missing Out on the Blessings

Too many people are missing out on the blessings of God because they have not been taught to give generously to support ministry efforts. Sadly, too often, it has been because our Christian leaders have been too

concerned what people might think, especially if they are directly connected. King Solomon understood it was God who gave people the ability to acquire wealth. All that he had as king was really God's – he was just a steward of the kingdom and its resources. He taught in his proverbs the benefit God's people receive when they don't hold on to money not really theirs, but use it to honor the Lord. *Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine (Prov. 3:9–10).*

Jesus didn't want people to miss out on the blessings of giving. The same individuals, who gave to his ministry and of the disciples, heard this message from the lips of the master and realized the blessings he spoke of applied to them as they supported his ministry. *“Give and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” (Luke 6:38).*

Could much of our hesitancy in asking people to join our ministry support team be the result of a fear of being lumped together with a group of charlatans that have been financially raping the body of Christ through their schemes to manipulate God's people to give them money for selfish gain?

As pastors, we have heard the stories. We have been outraged to think that people have been so taken advantage of, to the point that we want to distance ourselves far away from any connection to such persons or situations.

Jesus and his disciples were accused of such motives. We will not avoid such criticism or accusations as long as we serve the Lord. Think about it – even while we were receiving a salary from a church we served, there were still people who thought we earned too much, didn't work hard enough, or were living off the backs of people who were vulnerable. Criticism comes with the territory when stepping out to serve. People will find a reason to criticize you. It is part of our human and carnal nature.

The question we should continue to ask is “What pleases you God?” *“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10).*

Ministry is not about doing things to please people, but pleasing God. If God has spoken to your heart about raising up a team to financially support you, to partner with you in shepherding the shepherds, even if some might harshly criticize you for doing it, will you stop? Are you going to stand before God and give an account of your life and service and tell Him you couldn't do what

He wanted because people didn't like how you were raising your financial support? Really?

Who can stop you from fulfilling God's will in your life? Satan and his angels will try, but *greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world* (John 4:4). Satan can't stop you – not if you resist him in the power of the Spirit. People will try to stop you - sometimes well-meaning people. But we must listen to God rather than men (Acts 4:19). The only person that has the power to stop you is..... YOU! Don't let that happen. Where God guides, God provides. If He has called you to partner with us as a Standing Stone Associate, don't let anything stop you. Pastors, churches, and communities need your gifts, abilities, wisdom, experience, and loving care. We can do something very powerful together!

Who Would Want to Join Your Ministry Support Team?

God has put people in your life to accomplish all the things He has created you to do (Eph. 2:10). Understanding why God puts people together begins with knowing *that key relationships in our lives don't happen just by chance, coincidence, or accident.*

Let's consider the life of one of my favorite Bible characters - Joseph (Genesis 37). He was a young man who was accused of having foolish dreams – dreams of becoming a person of significance (Gen. 37:5-10). During

a time when Joseph could have been killed, God sent a caravan of Ishmaelites (v.25) to deliver him from the murderous intentions of his brothers. Yes, it felt like slavery, but it later became obvious to Joseph it was his deliverance from death and the path leading to fulfillment of his life's mission.

The next person put in Joseph's life to get him where he needed to go was Potiphar (v. 36). Potiphar was the captain of Pharaoh's bodyguard. How would Joseph's dream of significance turn into reality being a slave in Potiphar's house? Could Potiphar actually be an important person God had placed in Joseph's life to help those dreams come true? Joseph's faithfulness as a servant drew the favor of Potiphar so much so that he was placed over everything the captain owned (39:5-6), except his wife (v.9).

Have you noticed that God doesn't just use people who are godly in character? I believe God placed Potiphar's wife before Joseph, not to tempt him, but to model godliness before this lust-driven woman (v. 7-9). His faithfulness to his earthly master and to his God brought him to the next person he needed to come into a relationship with – the chief jailer (v. 21-23). Can you see the important progression of people God had prepared to be in Joseph's life to accomplish what God ultimately called him to do? All of these relationships were critical for his success. It was due to Joseph's new

position in the prison that he had access to Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and chief baker and, in due course, was able to hear and interpret the dreams they had received from God (40:1-23).

It was sheer brilliance the way our God orchestrated the path that led Joseph before Pharaoh. How could this Hebrew slave have stood before the most powerful man on the face of the earth and been handed the authority over all the Egyptian Kingdom (41:1-46) – the authority and power to save his family and millions of others (50:20)?

Here is the bottom line - Joseph fulfilled God's calling and became a man of incredible significance. God brought all the people into his life in order to make that happen.

God has put people in your ministry life to accomplish His will. You have been created to be a person of significance. *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).*

Who are the people that are going to help you acquire the financial support you need as a Standing Stone Associate? You already know everyone you need to know in order to acquire the financial support you need! Over the many years of your ministry, how many people

have you led to the Lord? How many people have you baptized? How many have you counseled? How many have you walked with through difficult times?

Listen - there are many people who have watched you, worked with you, trust you, and believe in you! There are many who think so highly of you, that if you were running for a political office, they would support you with their finances, time, and energy because they know you are a person of integrity and honor.

How much more would the people you've served desire to support you in an effort to avert this terrible crisis of pastors leaving the ministry and negatively impacting our churches today? The people you have touched through your ministry know the importance of a healthy pastor; the impact a healthy pastor makes upon an individual and community – the impact you have made on them!

Here is a recent Email from a person I have not seen in over 30 years.

Ken, you are an inspiration to me, and have been a pivotal part of God's plan in bringing me to my destiny. I have not forgotten the multiple times you spent in setting the foundation of ministry in my heart. You taught me how to worship, minister, love the difficult people, give of yourself when you were already tired and

things weren't going your way....You taught me how to always choose the positive approach to people when you felt they could use a good kick in the bottom, instead.

I remember at a key point of my life, how you came to the restaurant where I was working because you saw in me the calling of God that I couldn't see myself. You stood by me when I was lost and confused and you never condemned me but rather understood what I was feeling and knew God would never forsake me if I held on to His promises. I remember so many talks we had, and all the amazing testimonies I heard from others at the home bible study you led.

Never think for a moment that your investment into people's lives is fruitless, or a waste of time. God uses ALL of it, and the seeds planted continue to grow.

Thank you again!

Many of you don't realize the number of people you have greatly impacted over the span of your ministry. Even people you didn't know very well. These are very important people God brought into your life to help accomplish His will!

Standing Stone has been called to do something very significant to impact the Body of Christ in these coming years. To do it, we will need to follow God's direction

and use the resources He wants to provide to us. It would be foolish of us to reject the help of the people God has strategically put in our lives because of our pride and refuse to build a ministry partnership team.

Christians are looking for faithful people to invest in who will do something significant for the Church today! *“Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but a faithful man who can find (Prov. 20:6)?”* You have proven to so many people that you are a faithful servant and will be faithful to accomplish what God has put in your heart to do!

Return on Ministry Investment

Non-Christians want to give to something that is important, something of significance, and something that will make a difference in the lives of as many people as possible. Those in the business community that invest in start-up companies, political groups, and social causes expect to receive a return on their financial investment. They examine strategy, personnel, and methodology while considering the odds for success before investing their money. They don't want to be a part of something that will fail or will not accomplish what was promised.

Christians are the same way. They want to give to something that is important to the Kingdom of God,

something that is significant and will make a difference in our churches and in the communities they serve. They are asked many times to invest in ministry opportunities, but often wonder if their financial investment will be used wisely and produce what was promised. They want a return on their ministry investment. Remember, they are going to stand before the Lord and give an account for their stewardship.

Are there many things more important, significant, or impactful than having healthy pastors in our churches today that teach, model, and lead people in ways that bring glory to our God? Most Christians believe that a pastor's health and passionate service is critical for the Church to succeed in its calling to the world. Those who hold to that belief probably had a healthy pastor that made a tremendous impact on their lives and greatly contributed to their spiritual growth.

Few in the Body of Christ are really aware of the condition of ministry leaders and the challenges and struggles they face on a continuing basis. People are beginning to connect with the need for someone to care for our pastors and their families; to provide a safe environment for these ministry leaders to express their challenges and struggles without fear of retribution.

If someone was faced with a choice of investing in the ministry of a young person who felt called to a foreign

mission field or a seasoned pastor who has been called to caring for pastors leading our churches today, which one would have a greater chance for success and produce a greater return for one's ministry investment dollar? On one hand you have a person who believes he/she will be able to make a difference in the lives of foreigners in a strange land, be able to overcome the cultural differences, survive the hardships that will come his/her way, and fight back the spiritual attacks and lies of Satan who will certainly try to exploit the carnal nature and desires of an untested vessel wanting to be used of God. On the other hand, you have a seasoned pastor who has gone through the gauntlet of the enemy, experienced the pain and unrealistic expectations of people he had been called to serve, and paid a price for his family to live in a fishbowl. One who stayed consistent in his service to others who may not have honored him, affirmed him, or supported him during his great times of need and disappointment, and yet still remained faithful to his calling.

Which one would you put your ministry investment dollar on? The one who thinks he/she can be successful? Or the one who has a proven track record of saying they will do something and, come hell or high water, have done it? I'll put my money on you – one who has spent your life in serving others! Not for the money! Not for the recognition of others! But for the glory of God and

your love for our Savior! There have been plenty of people who have said they would do things – you have done it! There is no one better to care and serve our existing pastors than you – you are a gift to the Body of Christ!

Fully Funded = Ministry Freedom

I have asked many experienced pastors this important question, “If money was not an issue, what would you do today to fulfill God’s calling on your life?” Their eyes seemed to dance with excitement when thinking of what they would passionately do for Christ without financial limitation. Many have expressed to me how they had been made to feel like a hireling, able to only do what a few powerful men in their church wanted them to do. Often feeling trapped, they would feel pressured to focus on things others wanted them to do in fear that if they didn’t, they would make some people mad and lose their jobs. The thought of having the freedom to do anything God has called them to do, without worrying how the bills would be paid or what elder or deacon needed to be pleased seems unreachable. But it’s not!

Being in partnership with a group of people on your ministry support team is achievable. There are people who believe in you, trust you, and want to support you in your ministry! Your ministry should only be limited by

the vision God has placed in your heart. Being fully funded means that you have the freedom to do whatever God has called you to accomplish.

If God has called you to shepherd the shepherds, come join me in this incredible task. It is a great work that God has spent years preparing us for – what we have been created to do. Who can stop us? Satan will try, but he is not that powerful. The only one who can is the one looking at you in the mirror. Don't let your fear and pride keep you from fulfilling your divine destiny. Let's continue to put our trust in Him – our God – our King and do something that could be more significant and impactful than anything we have done to date!

Next Steps

If this booklet has inspired you to pursue becoming a Standing Stone Associate, here are the next steps you should consider taking.

Step #1 – Contact me at ken@standingstoneministry.org or the Director of the Associates Program, Kimble Knight at kimble@standingstoneministry.org and let us answer questions you may have about our ministry.

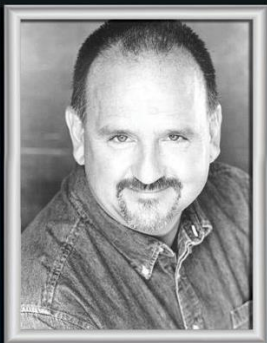
Step #2 – Go online to www.standingstoneministry.org and fill out an application (no obligation).

Step #3 – Attend an Associate Training in one of many locations around the country.

After attending a SSMA Training, you can then decide if you want to partner with us to accomplish the mission of Standing Stone Ministry.

I hope to have the privilege of partnering with you in the future. May God richly bless you as He directs you in the years to come – and may you finish well!

Ken Eichler
Director of Ministry



Ken Eichler

is the Director of Ministry for Standing Stone. Ken has 40 years of pastoral ministry experience and has mentored dozens of pastors over the years. He has a passion for pastors to experience a greater level of health and satisfaction in their ministry and marriage.

Standing Stone Associates are seasoned pastors committed to building mentoring relationships with at-risk pastors needing encouragement while helping them process their struggles, challenges, and issues without fear of retribution.

Standing Stone Ministry is a 501c3 Non-Profit Corporation founded by Jim and Debbie Hogan. Its mission and commitment is to reduce the number of pastors leaving the ministry due to burnout and marital issues. By assembling a team of experienced pastors and ministry couples to care for at-risk pastors and their spouses, Standing Stone is being positioned to make a significant impact on churches and the communities they serve.

