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The Local Church *and the* Every Member Canvass

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THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE EVERY MEMBER CANVASS

THE OBJECTIVE SOUGHT.

In the conduct of its finances a church should seek to enlist every member as a weekly contributor both to the current expenses of the church and to the benevolent enterprises of the denomination. In this policy the objective should be twofold: first, to secure enough money to enable the church to pay all of its obligations promptly and fully; second, to utilize the offerings as an agency of enlistment and growth in grace. While the first is very important, the second is perhaps more important.

The first is important because the church that meets all its bills promptly has prestige in the community and "*a good report of them that are without.*" The credit of a church should be equal to that of a national bank or of the United States Government. "The children of this world should not be wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Adequate provision should be made for the material needs of the pastor and his family; this stimulates him and adds to his efficiency; it enables him to study with more concentration, pray with more fervor, and preach with more power. The obligation of the church to the general denominational enterprises should be paid with the same regularity and promptness as its obligation to local expenses.

OFFERING IS PART OF WORSHIP.

In the second place, the weekly offering should be accounted a vital feature of worship and therefore an agency for promoting growth in grace. Dr. A. J. Gordon wisely said: "As touching the matter of giving, we touch the most vital point pertaining to the consecration and spiritual power of the church." It has untold value in the matter of enlistment, on the ground that "where the treasure is, there is the heart also."

SCRIPTURAL PLAN.

The following are some of the passages that suggest in a brief and comprehensive way the scriptural plan of church finance:

First Corinthians 16:2: "Upon the *first* day of the week let *every one of you* lay by him in store as God hath prospered him."

Deuteronomy 16:16, 17: "They shall not appear before the Lord *empty*; *every man* shall give as he is able according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee."

Psalms 96:8: "Bring an offering and come into His courts."

Leviticus 27:30: "And *all* the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the *Lord's*; it is holy unto the Lord."

Second Corinthians 8:7: "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all diligence and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also."

EVERY MEMBER CANVASS—WHY?

The every member house to house canvass, by trained and devout men, going like the "other seventy," "two and two," is found to be the most effective means of promoting the above policy. To be more specific, it is valuable for the following reasons:

First, it is the *only* plan by which the obligation of supporting the Kingdom may be brought personally to *every man, woman, and child in the church*. The public appeal on a favorable Sunday morning, attended by a call for signed pledges, would perhaps not reach more than one-third of the membership; it fails with those whom it is most vital to reach.

Second, it supplements the *general* appeal of the pastor's sermon by framing a *special* appeal that is suited to each member's character and mode of thought.

Third, it utilizes the personal element; consecrated personality is a magnetic force. There are few that will not respond to the tactful solicitor. Personal hypnotism is brought to bear.

PROMOTES ATTENDANCE AT SERVICES.

Fourth, it promotes attendance on the worship of God's house. The canvassers not only *encourage* all to come to church, but a new contributor usually means a new attendant. *If a man's dollar goes to church, he is likely to go along with it.*

Fifth, it promotes fellowship; the visit of the two brethren in the home, where they manifest their concern for the family and discuss the common interests of their church, is wholesome. To induce virtually all to make offerings, so that "some shall not be eased and others burdened, but there may be equality," does much for fellowship.

Sixth, it is the means of collecting much information that will prove of value to the pastor and other officers. It will bring to light cases of need and distress, prospective members of the church and its Sunday School, members who are alienated for some cause, etc.

Seventh, it will be a great blessing to the men who make the canvass; some will learn for the first time the blessedness of service and enter upon a career of usefulness.

EVERY MEMBER CANVASS—HOW?

It is vital to stress *thoroughness* in the preparation, the canvass itself, and the follow-up.

I. Preparation.

1. Selection of a strong canvassing committee, to be composed of deacons, members of the missionary committee, and other capable brethren. Let these men, especially the *leader* of each pair, be carefully selected; a visit, when necessary, by one or more influential friends, to induce a brother to serve, is wise. Modest yet *efficient* brethren will not volunteer. Men of good *business* and *religious* standing are needed.

2. Division of membership into groups of about twenty. Assign members to those canvassers that have most influence with them. Assignment by streets or neighborhoods is not usually most effective. In this day of good roads, good sidewalks, autos, etc., a little extra travel is no great burden.

3. Preparation of the committee:

(a) By meeting with the pastor for conference and prayer.

(b) By the reading of tracts on missions, stewardship, etc.

4. Preparation of the church:

(a) By sermons from the pastor on stewardship, missions, etc.

(b) By discussion at prayer meeting for three or more weeks. Make the canvass also a matter of much prayer.

(c) By wise distribution of tracts on stewardship and kindred topics among all the membership.

(d) By a strong letter from the pastor and the chairman of the board of deacons or finance committee to every member, outlining the plan, enclosing printed slip showing the budget, making an appeal for prayerful coöperation and urging all to remain at home the Sunday of the canvass until seen by the committee.

(e) Visitations in the homes by zealous women, going in pairs, a week or two before the canvass. They will urge the mother to have the family at home on the date of canvass, to create sentiment in her family, and seek to have a conference, as suggested later.

(f) A supper for the men, when this plan and the general interests of the church shall be discussed in the freest way. At this supper there should be an exhibit of the gifts of the church for the preceding year, showing the amount per capita per week, both for church support and benevolences; also a detailed statement of the budget for the next year.

The Budget Defined.

By the budget is meant a carefully prepared estimate of the amount of money the church should undertake to raise, both for local support and for the benevolent enterprises of the denomination. After this estimate has been carefully prepared by the deacons or finance committee, it should be sub-

mitted to the church for its ratification. The following is a suggested budget:

<i>For Ourselves.</i>	<i>For Others.</i>
Pastor's Salary	State Missions
Pastor's Helper	Home Missions
Janitor	Foreign Missions
Heat and Light	Christian Education
Insurance	Ministerial Relief
Church Organizations	Orphanages
Supplies	Hospitals
Repairs	Local Missions
Incidentals	Miscellaneous

5. Let the pastor preach a special sermon at 11 on the day of the canvass, assemble all the members of the committee in front of the pulpit, and offer appropriate words, both to the committee and church followed by prayer.

6. There should be a conference in every home of the church to decide what the pledge of each member should be.

II. Canvass.

1. Make the canvass on Sunday afternoon; it is the Lord's day and the Lord's work; the members should "be in the Spirit on the Lord's day"; all can be at home and the brethren can have time to do effective service.

2. The pastor and the canvassers should meet at the church about 2 p.m., have a brief season of prayer, several participating in sentence petitions, then allow five minutes for each canvasser to sign his own pledge card. The canvassers should be as liberal as their resources will justify; they are then in position to urge others to be generous.

3. Strive to secure a weekly pledge, both for church support and benevolences, from every member and adherent. "*Let every one of you lay by him in store.*" This policy does much to enlist and develop the children. The offering is an *expression* of individual love and devotion, an act of worship, and cannot be performed by proxy.

4. Let canvassers have the record of every member, the amount of his contribution the year before and some idea of what he is able to give; provide

pledge cards and duplex envelopes for the use of all subscribers.

5. Tactfully urge attendance on all the regular services, loyalty to pastor, and seek to develop church spirit.

6. Let a canvasser of experience go with a new man, both striving to be tactful, cheerful and resourceful.

7. Each team of two men should secure the list of members to be visited in advance, confer as to the order in which they should be seen, and the plan and method most likely to win in each case. See the most sympathetic and generous first, and so on, gathering momentum for the more difficult as you proceed.

8. Seek to complete the canvass the same afternoon, and devote the evening hour to echoes of canvass, using discretion in the matter reported.

9. Plan to complete the campaign without delay; some, perhaps, were away from home. If some declined to subscribe, have another committee of two or more of the strongest men see them again. Be wisely persistent. Fix Wednesday night as the date for the final and complete report. Do not stop, however, until every resident member has been seen in person and every non-resident member communicated with by letter.

10. The homes of the *canvassers* should have the blessing of a visit. Let the mother and the children in such cases have the privilege of greeting the brethren and of delivering their own pledge cards. Promotion of fellowship is a significant item.

III. Follow-Up.

At the close of each month, by the use of a courteous form, give notice by mail to any who may be in arrears and who are not sensitive regarding this plan. In case of those of small income, a personal visit is perhaps the wisest; they may be sick or out of work and need encouragement and help. The visit should be made by the two brethren that secured the pledge. Both the notice and the visit should be characterized by a good spirit. We wish to cultivate good fellowship and strengthen church loyalty, as well as secure money. Frequent sermons

on missions and stewardship constitute a vital element of an effective follow-up. Information begets interest and interest expresses itself in enlarging gifts. Sermons are much more effective when no high pressure collection is to follow, and the attendance of those that should be enlisted is better.

IV. Caution.

With the most thorough campaign, some may not be enlisted in this weekly method; besides, men of large incomes rarely subscribe by the week the full measure of their responsibility. At least twice a year there should be a thorough round-up for the purpose of reaching those who do not contribute systematically, and of getting extra and thank offerings from others. From week to week encourage those that have been especially blessed to make liberal free will offerings. Reserve the right, when some urgent and unforeseen demand arises, to make a special appeal for extra funds.