

L01 — The Accounts and the Money

This lesson is the setup lesson. By the end of it you will know the three accounts this ministry runs on, what each one costs, and why those numbers matter for the kids later. You will do this once, and then you will mostly never think about it again.

Account one is GitHub. Think of it as the church's filing cabinet for websites. Every website the kids build lives there as a project, and GitHub quietly remembers every version of every file, forever. That last part matters more than it sounds: it means nothing the kids do can ever be truly lost or truly broken. If a Tuesday meeting goes sideways, you restore yesterday's version and move on. GitHub is free.

Account two is Railway. If GitHub is the filing cabinet, Railway is the building where the website actually lives - the thing that keeps it on the internet, awake and answering, at three in the morning. You connect Railway to the filing cabinet, point it at a website project, and it takes care of the rest. Railway costs about five dollars a month for each website you keep running. Hold onto that number; it is going to come back.

Account three is the AI assistant. This is the tool the kids actually talk to - they type plain English, it edits the website. One shared account on the church's computer is all you need, and a plan suitable for this runs about twenty dollars a month. The kids never log into it themselves; it is simply already open on the machine when the meeting starts.

So the whole ministry costs the church about twenty dollars a month, plus five for each website you have adopted. Two sites? Thirty a month. That is the entire

technical budget. No contractor, no agency, no surprises.

Now here is why I want you to actually memorize the five dollar number. Later in this course, your kids are going to learn to have a donation conversation. After they hand a church or a business their finished website, free and clear, they will say something like: this site costs about five dollars a month to keep online - would you consider supporting our youth group to cover that and more? That conversation only works because it is true. It is not a sales trick; it is honest stewardship math, and the kids should know the real numbers behind what they are giving away. When the donation comes in, it covers the hosting and then some, and the ministry funds itself.

One more idea before your build, and it is the only structural rule in this whole lesson: one website, one project. The starter kit is a master copy. Every time the kids adopt a new church or business, you make a fresh copy of the kit in GitHub - it is one button, called fork - and you name that copy after who it is for. First Baptist gets its own. The flower shop gets its own. They never share, which means a change to one can never break another, and any of them can be handed over someday without untangling anything.

Your build for this lesson: create the three accounts, in the church's name, with the church's email address. GitHub first, Railway second, the AI assistant third. Write the three passwords down wherever your church keeps its other important passwords - not in the browser, and we will talk about why in the next lesson. Then make your first fork of the starter kit. The kit's own instructions, in the For the Group Leader section you already read, walk you through every click. Give yourself a quiet half hour, and when those three accounts exist, the hard part of this entire ministry is behind you.