

The Heart of Fund-Raising

by Daryl Heald



We are living in an incredible age: Not only does America's unparalleled prosperity make ours the first mass affluent society in world history, as public-policy expert Dinesh D'Souza observed, but the church of Jesus Christ is poised for explosive growth around the globe.

I often hear, "If we only had the money, we could . . ." But if the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, as the psalmist says, and if ministries are in fact going about their Father's business, why do they lack funds? Why do Christian givers who have been entrusted with so much wealth keep so much of it for themselves?

We don't have to dig too deeply into charitable giving statistics to realize that the current way that we've gone about raising funds for Christian work is just as broken as the way we give these funds. It's not necessarily a matter of articulating a clearer vision, improving a ministry's effectiveness, strengthening the economic position or securing political stability that will generate greater giving; it's a matter of transforming the heart.

Much of our conversation on fund-raising and giving seems to center on things other than heart transformation; instead, many seek to improve their tactics or perfect their transactions. Both of these are important—but fund-raising must begin with a transformation of the heart.

Tactics. Tactics refers to "the art or skill of employing available means to accomplish an end." When we think tactically about our giving, we ask questions like: To whom do I give? Where do I give? When do I give? How much do I give? To what do I give? These questions have much more to do with one's strategic understanding of the fullness of God's kingdom—*our minds*.

Transactions. A transaction is "an act or process of doing business." When we think transactionally about our giving, we ask questions

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like: What is the best vehicle for our giving (e.g., checkbook, Internet, donor-advised funds, foundations)? When is the best time to make this gift (e.g., one-time, quarterly, end of year)? How should I make this gift (e.g., cash, appreciated assets, in kind)? Who can help me manage my gift process? This realm of questioning is influenced more by the financial realities and context of the giver—*our pocketbooks*.

Transformation. This word Webster defines as "a change in character or condition." When we think through our giving transformationally, we ask only one question: Why? Why give in the first place? Why not keep more for myself? Why does God need it? Why has he asked me to participate? This line of questioning

moves us into the theological and philosophical realm—*our hearts*.

For too long, givers and ministries have focused exclusively on tactics and transactions, underestimating the need for transformation. We have unwittingly created and perpetuated a culture of frugal tipping, rather than generous giving. Without tackling the question of why we give in the first place, it is virtually impossible to break our culture's materialistic grip, or to believe Christ when He said laying up treasures in heaven is better than storing them up here on earth.

So what does this mean to you as a ministry leader? God has given you a unique role to play in facilitating a revolution of generosity to Christ's Kingdom. If we ever expect to witness such extraordinary wealth released for these extraordinary opportunities, it will require an extraordinary response from ministry leaders. It will likely mean changing the way you go about raising funds and relating to givers. Help givers answer the "why give" question, and be intentional about discipling them on their journey to generosity.

Let's consider three principles, along with some practical steps you can take to cultivate greater generosity in givers.

Model with authenticity. Evangelist John Stott, commenting on the state of church giving and the role of the pastor, once noted, "The pew will never rise higher than the pulpit." As a ministry leader, you should not take a giver where you have not been yourself. This means that you must be at least one step ahead in your understanding and practice of Christ's teaching, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

You and your board must, on a percentage basis, be generous to

the ministry as well. One ministry leader told me of a giver who, after inquiring about the most exciting opportunity in that ministry, asked outright: "If this is such a great opportunity, how much are you putting in?" You must be secure in your calling, confident of where God has intended you to be and, therefore, empowered to ask on behalf of the King for His kingdom.

Conduct a personal giving analysis: Are you being financially sacrificial and generous to God's kingdom, specifically to your ministry? Next, look at the aggregate giving of your staff and board; determine what percentage this represents to your overall budget, and set a goal with your team to see that percentage increase annually.

Lead with the kingdom. Your ministry is part of God's kingdom. If you truly believe that God's work will be funded in His timing to His glory, then be winsome and willing to place the Kingdom ahead of your ministry.

Too often we are so focused on what God has asked us to accomplish, that we forget that givers are involved in their own churches and multiple ministries. On average most givers contribute to at least a dozen organizations annually. Why not talk about your ministry in the broader context of the Great Commission, helping givers understand where yours fits in relationship to other kingdom work about which they are passionate? You might explain, for example, how evangelism and Scripture distribution work together, or how relief and development can be a catalyst for church planting.

A ministry leader once told me of a giver who asked him a number of questions about two other ministries. Because he was familiar enough with these organizations, the ministry leader proceeded to

answer the giver's questions. As their discussion came to a close, the giver handed him two checks for \$100,000 each—made out to those other two ministries! How would you feel if you were that ministry leader? Would you celebrate those two checks as a win for Christ's kingdom, or as a loss to your ministry?

Add a field in your donor database that tracks the various ministries in which your givers are involved. That way you'll be able to network them effectively with appropriate relationships, information, knowledge and conferences—all for the sake of the Kingdom.

Bring something to the table.

With an ever increasing pressure to take ministry to the next level,

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many givers feel as if the “ask” was more about getting than giving, less about grace than expectations. Turn the table and ask yourself what you can offer to your givers because, as Jesus said, “Generosity begets generosity” (Luke 6:38, The Message).


Pastor Andy Stanley in Atlanta has gone out of his way to create a culture of generosity at North Point Community Church. When asked about this, he replied, “Before we can ask something from our members, we must ask what we want for them.” So, what do you want for the givers to your ministry?

The apostle Paul declared to the Philippians, “Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account” (4:7). Here the apostle desired that they be credited with heavenly

treasure. What other things can we desire for our givers? How about grace, joy, blessings, freedom, affirmation, peace, family unity or health?

Build your own list with the leadership of your ministry and make these points of prayer and expected outcomes in your development process. Continue with that list and ask what you can tangibly do for them, such as: praying for their needs; affirming their unique calling in Christ as givers; equipping them with resources on generosity like books or CDs to help them on their journey to maturity in the Lord.

No doubt, one of the hardest aspects of excelling in ministry is fund-raising. In Paul's letter to the wealthy and talented Corinthian church, he admonishes them to keep on using their gifts but not to forget an important aspect of who we are in Christ—givers: “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (II Corinthians 8:7).

So along with the tremendous talent, vision, passion and mission embodied within your ministry, see that you model with authenticity; lead with the kingdom; and bring something to the table. In this way, you will help others to experience the joy of generosity. 

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