

God, Generosity, and Asking

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“Only as we understand the relationship between spiritual growth and faithful stewardship can we embrace fundraising as a ministry.” R. Scott Rodin

In God’s eyes, (as the previous four issues have outlined) there is a vital link between our earthy possessions and our eternal soul. R. Scott Rodin, in his book *Stewards in the Kingdom*, reminds us, “Giving is primarily a spiritual matter, an act of obedient worship to God.” When we acknowledge that God owns everything, we realize that God’s priority is developing faithful disciples and seeing us mature spiritually through our generosity. We realize that how we handle our possessions on earth has far-reaching eternal consequences.

Building on these assumptions, what should fund raising programs at Christian organizations look like? Is it possible from God’s perspective that the spiritual growth of your supporters through their giving should be a higher priority than the bottom line of dollars raised? Is it possible that spiritual growth cannot blossom until a generous, giving heart is developed? Is it possible that most Christian organizations’ fund raising programs are more closely aligned with a secular business model (sales and bottom line accountability) than with a God-honoring, discipleship-making model? What is the balance of technique, personality, and the work of the Holy Spirit. In their book, *Growing Givers Hearts*, Tom Jeavons and Rebekah Basinger compare and contrast how a ministry-focused model of raising support is very different from the commonly used secular model.

It all boils down to values. What values are more important to you and the organization you govern? The values you as a Board member holds about these topics shape the decisions you make. Here is a list of ten questions that you can ask yourself and those responsible for raising support for the organization you govern to see if you are reinforcing God’s values in your fund raising efforts.

1. Does your organization see their primary job is to help people become generous by trusting in God and growing in their understanding of godly giving, or is the priority raising maximum dollars no matter what the technique?
2. Do those involved in raising support view their roles as shepherds of the stewards of God's possessions? If so, what evidence exists in the use of time, activities, and events to raise support?
3. Does your organization design programs that challenge your supporters to move from believers to disciples? Do you care about the heart of the ministry partner, or is getting the funds the main concern?
4. Does your organization have a consistent program of prayer support, believing that it is the Holy Spirit that influences people's generosity? (Zech. 4:6) What evidence is there that prayer is a priority in seeking support?
5. Do you use language that supports this ministry view verses a secular fund raising worldview perspective? Are your supporters ministry partners or stewards, or are they donors?
6. Does a one-kingdom worldview/no competition in the kingdom view permeate your organization's activities? If a person desires to support another legitimate ministry different from yours, is that okay with you?
7. Does your organization have a written statement explaining the theological underpinnings of how you view God, money, giving, and asking? If you have one, has the Board approved it, and is it made available to those you want to support your organization?
8. Is integrity a high value to not exploit trust, hide costs, or avoid reporting failures? (Mark 12:38-40) How transparent are you willing to be with your constituents, or how hard do you work to put a positive spin on your messages?
9. When seeking fund raising staff, do you place high value on spiritual maturity and theological reflection that endorses these values? (Mark 6:21) Are you more concerned with fund raising experience and success in raising dollars?

10. Is there a coordinated approach to the organization's program goals and money acquisition process? (Phil. 1:5, 4:13) Are your goals reasonable to achieve, and what if God did not choose to provide the support you sought? How would you respond?

Generous giving will happen when the hearts of believers align their faith with Christ. As a Board member, you have a responsibility to take the lead in your own life and then encourage others similarly through a coordinated education program. Thinking and acting like Christians in our secular culture is not easy. It takes a big adjustment for most of us. However, you have a tremendous opportunity to assess your personal life and to influence the organizations you govern. Hopefully, these questions will stir you to act upon God honoring practices in producing generosity.

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