

Biblical Basis of Giving – Part I

Rob Martin

How do you feel about fundraising? Do you dislike it? Even hate it? The hope of this introduction, **The Biblical Basis of Giving**, is that we will explore our ideas about fundraising--why we dislike it and why it is Godly.

CLASS DISCUSSION: Did Jesus need money? Did He need money when He was doing His ministry? How did Jesus pay his taxes? He had Peter go get a fish with a coin in its mouth. How did He feed the 5,000? By multiplying a few fish and some bread into enough loaves and fishes to feed thousands. In both cases, he took something very natural and made something very supernatural out of it. But, in both cases He also demonstrated His lack of need for money. If He wanted to pay His taxes, he could have paid it out of the common purse, but he chose not to use that method. Our basic assumption is that He didn't need money, but He used it, even though He didn't need it.

A great example to help understand this concept is perhaps a little obscure scripture, found in Luke 8:1-3 (NIV). *“After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.”*

So even though it was demonstrated that Jesus didn't need money, He accepted money from people that he ministered to. Why did he do that? I believe Jesus accepted money from people because they needed to give, not because He needed to receive. Perhaps the biblical basis of fundraising and stewardship begins with the need of the donor to give.

In my own life I became a Christian at the age of 33. Six months after I became a Christian I got my first paycheck. I was a total wreck. It was like my life was a traffic accident from which I had been saved from the wreckage. It took me many months to really get my act together sufficiently to where I could earn money. My first paycheck was \$600. I knew, even though I had not been taught in the six months that I was a Christian that I needed to give 10% of that and, here's the key point, I didn't want to. I suddenly got fixated on the \$60 that represented what I thought I needed to tithe. That \$60 became more important to me than the \$540 that I had. I was fixated on giving away money. I was 33 years old and I had never done it. But I knew what I was supposed to do. I took a long walk on the streets of Santa Ana for many hours, throughout the

entire morning and into the early afternoon, pondering this question about giving.

I finally arrived, after all of my ruminations, to the idea that it was all God's and that giving back some of what was already His was part of my worship to Him. At the end of that day, I took that \$60 and gratefully gave it, tithed it to my church. From that moment on I have never looked back and I have been a joyful giver because I understand that it belongs to God.

The real importance of that day is this: I believe that was the day I became a disciple of Jesus. Before that, I was an observer--I wasn't a participant. I was someone who was benefiting from an association with Jesus because I was being healed. But it wasn't costing me anything. That day, with that small tithe, I became a disciple. Until that day that I took that walk in Santa Ana and began my tithing I wouldn't pray over my meals because I felt it was hypocritical. I thought these meals were the result of my own work. That day my worldview shifted and I realized that the very breath I breathe is a gift from God. When I realized that my very breath, which is more precious to me than money, is from God, then the money itself is from Him. Even though I have to work to get the money. Ever since then I have always prayed over my meals out of this understanding of how dependent I am on God and how grateful I am that He has given this to me. (I am grateful for birthdays for the same reason, another year of life that He has given me. None of it is deserved, it is all grace).

The discipleship of all believers comes when they give up their self-sufficiency and begin to understand their dependency on God. Money means self-sufficiency to us. It takes an uncommon generosity to give it away. It's not logical. Not when you need it for everything you do.

As a human being, as a disciple of Christ, I need to give my money joyfully as a working demonstration of my lack of self sufficiency, because I'm giving away my self sufficiency when I give away my money. When we fund raise we are giving the donor a chance at participating in God's Kingdom work. That is where it all begins.

CLASS DISCUSSION: In class I'll take out my wallet and I'll have them take out their wallets and purses, hold them in their right hand and ask them, "Do you want to be loved for that, or do you want to be loved for yourself?" The role of fundraising is to love the bride of Christ, not her purse, or said another way, to love the donor and not his wallet, to have a passion for the donor, a passion for this exchange between ourselves and God. Jesus took the money of these women (in Luke 8:3), not because he needed it, but because he had a passion for them. They gave it because they had the need to give it. They wanted to serve the twelve in this ministry of good news because the good news had meant something to them. So there's a complete spiritual exchange going on.

Who is the most celebrated donor in all of history? The poor widow. In Luke 21 (NIV) it is recorded, *“As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. I tell you the truth, he said, this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”* She gave out of her poverty, the sacrifice. Wealth isn't necessarily a sign of God's blessing, but we often mistake it as that. There is great joy in great sacrifice and living by a knowledge of God.

I first learned this lesson of depending on God for my sufficiency before I was tithing. I was doing a volunteer project at the Rescue Mission because I had nothing else to do. I was wandering around taking pictures; I was a few weeks old in the Lord. I was there in the afternoon with the staff, which was comprised of men off the streets and there was no food. We had maybe 17-18 old refrigerators around the wall all on zip cords--it was a fire marshal's nightmare. They went around all the refrigerators and there was nothing to prepare. So the staff said, we've got to pray, we've got to serve a meal tonight and there will be 60-80 people coming for dinner and we don't have a soup pot going. There was no panic and I'm thinking, if I had some money I'd buy the food, but I would have missed perhaps one of the greatest lessons of my life. So they got together in prayer circle. It was the first time I had been in a group where people were praying out loud [and I was very uncomfortable] “Oh God, we've got to serve a meal tonight and we have no food.” While they were praying, there was this loud banging on the door that interrupted us. They kept trying to pray, but the banging persisted. Finally, they went and unlocked the front door of the mission and there was a short little bald guy in a bad sport coat with a huge Cadillac and a cigar in his mouth. He was a frozen food broker coming back from a convention. Every inch of the trunk of his Cadillac was crammed with defrosting steak dinners that had been his samples. Instead of throwing them away (he had a heart of gold) he found the Rescue Mission in the phone book. What was really amazing to me was the staff went, “That's great, thanks.” I was thinking I just witnessed the parting of the Red Sea and they're thinking, that's just God, that's how He works.

Later, when I was the Administrative Director of the mission, we had been forced out of our downtown location and I had been working out of a trailer on our building site. We were working from cash. We were being sued to close the mission down. The lawsuit was coming to a head in two weeks time and I was about \$27,000 short of being able to finish out the mission, I still need to get my final inspections and get people housed. I went to a board meeting where we met in the trailer.

The attorney brought his report first and said, "We have to be open within two weeks. Because in two weeks and a day we're going in front of the court and if we're not open, I know this judge, he'll put us in a stay and there's a good chance the other side will win". I then gave my report and said, "I'm \$27,000 short and without it I can't open". There was a lot of bickering and discussion going on and finally the most humble guy on the board stood up and said, "Look, okay we're tired it's late. I don't know what to do about this; none of the rest of us does, let's just pray and see what God will do. He prayed and he said, "Lord we're tired, we need to go home and get some rest, we need \$27,000. We're tired of asking man for what man can do, we need what you can do, please help us, Amen." Then everyone went home.

The next morning my secretary, who got to the mission earlier than I did that day, found a cardboard box sitting in front of the front door on the trailer in the worst neighborhood, the most murderous neighborhood in all of Santa Ana in all of Orange County. We were constantly getting ripped off and there was a little box sitting by the door. She came in, tried to kick the box out of the way because people were always putting donations around the mission. It was heavy, so she opened it up and inside was gold and silver coins and gold and silver bars. They were just dumped in the box, no piece of paper with it. So of course I get a frantic phone call saying I've got to get to the office. I get to the office, I looked at the box and I was absolutely stunned. I took it inside, I called the police and I asked them without telling them who I was, "Has anyone reported any gold or silver bars or coins stolen? The guy said, "No, who is this"? I said, "No problem" and hung up. I thought at first that maybe someone had completed a robbery, felt guilty about it and put it on the mission's doorstep. I didn't think it was God. But it was. So I took the bars and the coins, sold it, got cash and within thirteen days was ready to open the mission, but I had a \$1,000 bill for the final installation of the toilets. It was a Thursday afternoon; the court date was Friday the next morning. In walks a guy off the street who I'd never seen before with a \$1,000 check. Well, the plumber was there and by this time the city inspector [who I think was a believer], who was hanging around the mission every day just to see what would happen next. If you know city inspectors, that's a miracle by itself. He came in, signed off, and we went across the street into this park and invited all the homeless to come inside. The next morning I was in court with my attorney and the opposition was called up first. They asked for a stay on the mission, saying, "Your honor, it's not open yet". Before he could get his next word out, my attorney pops up and says, "Excuse me, he's got his information wrong". The attorney looks over at him and my attorney says, "We're open, you can go there now, they've

just finished the morning dishes and there were fifty people in the beds last night.

The judge looked over at the opposition and said, I'm sorry. I'm not putting the homeless out on the street. He gaveled the case closed and that was it.

Those things showed me the power of prayer and what God can do when He chooses to act. But many of us still hate fundraising and think there is something ungodly about asking for money. Here is the next fundamental shift you have to make. Fundraising is not holy begging. Fundraising is making offers to people to participate in a godly adventure.

CLASS DISCUSSION: Well, I've just given examples in my own life of the power of God shown to me at that Rescue Mission through the frozen food and the box of gold coins and bars, and there isn't a single person in genuine ministry before God that can't tell similar stories. I've heard story after story about how they did nothing and God provided. God provided for them in miraculous ways to deepen their faith and to confirm to them that their sense of calling was correct. So the idea of fundraising almost fights against the idea of calling in people's minds and what we're trying to do is get these ideas to the point where they are not seen as mutually exclusive.

Two of the greatest fundraisers of all time are Biblical heroes. One is David and the other is Paul. David, as recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:1-5 (NIV): *"Then King David said to the whole assembly, [He's getting ready to take the offering for the temple] "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is young and inexperienced. The task is great, because this palatial structure is not for man but for the Lord God. With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God—gold for the gold work, silver for the silver, bronze for the bronze, iron for the iron and wood for the wood, as well as onyx for the settings, turquoise, stones of various colors, and all kinds of fine stone and marble—all of these in large quantities. Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the Lord?"*

In this example, (we can certainly draw from many others in scripture) we see that there is this great work of God that needs to be accomplished and that is the temple, this place of worship. We see that David has given all of his wealth to that work and now he stands and says, "Do you want to participate?" He's making an offer. This is correct fundraising. It may be correct for you not to do any fundraising and to just pray, or it may be correct to do that and do what David has done here, where you solicit people to participate in the work that you

are doing. If you're leading an orphanage--your temple is the orphan. If you're pastoring a church, the work of God is the work of the church and it needs to be funded and David did that.

THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL GIVING 2 Corinthians 8-9 (NIV)

“It is amazing to me that so much doctrine and ethics can be involved in, what at first sight, is just a simple, straight-forward transfer of cash from one person to another or from one group to another.” --John Stott

The following is drawn from a John Stott Bible Study:

1. Giving is an Expression of the Grace of God

Let's read 2 Corinthians Chapters 8-9 (NIV): and look at Paul: *“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches”*. This is the first principle of Biblical giving: **giving can be an expression of the grace of God**. The idea is that the other side of giving is asking. Paul spends two full chapters of his letter to the Corinthians on fundraising and on an offering being taken from the Macedonians, challenged to the Corinthians to be collected with all of the top leaders of the church, Titus and others, to then take it to the poor in Jerusalem.

“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.”

2. Giving Can Be a Charisma - Gift

“Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.” Second, **giving can be a charisma, it can be a gift**.

“And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.” So here we're seeing from the giver's point of view that they need to give, they were seeking to give.

“So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 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.” This verse is the key verse regarding giving being a charisma, a gift.

3. Giving is Inspired by the Cross of Christ

"I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." Three, **giving is inspired by the cross of the Christ.***

4. Giving is Proportionate – Proportionate to Our Wealth

"And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have."

If you are really eager to give, it isn't important how much you're able to give, God wants you to give what you have, not what you don't have. So it is **proportional giving, proportionate to our wealth.** The poor widow's giving was sacrificial giving and it touched Jesus deeply.

5. Giving Contributes to a Measure of Equality

"Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written, "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

6. Giving Must Be Carefully Supervised

"I am thankful to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative. And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help. We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men."

Here they took the top people, Titus and this other unnamed brother and put together a team to show their faithfulness to the brothers and sisters of the churches that they were gathering the money from. Careful, accurate, reporting to your donors is **scriptural**, as you do not want to have any suspicions that you are handling their donation incorrectly. We only have to look at what Paul did with the offerings; he took his top people and put a lot of effort into the area of

accountability. Accountability, audits, financials, good record-keeping, is Biblical, not extra-Biblical.

When grantors let the grantee know what they're doing and ask the grantee to report on how the money was spent, they are just being fair and accurate. This is a standard that we have to hold ourselves to at First Fruit. This is very important. When you think about what Paul did, this wasn't just a couple of guys getting on an airplane with a satchel full of money, think about how much of their lives was put into carrying this offering from Greece to Jerusalem. They may have spent an entire year just carrying the offering and these men were their top preachers.

7. Giving Can Be Stimulated By Competition

“In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you. As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.”

“There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action.”

When we ask for money, we need to engage this eagerness with opportunity. That is what it is all about.

Think about this: Do Macedonians and Greeks get along today? They do not. Did they get along then? They did not. Did the Greeks see themselves as better than the Macedonians? You bet. Was Paul aware of that? He was. Was he playing on that in this scripture? Yes, he was.

“But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollow, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. For if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to say anything about you—would be ashamed of having been so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.”

8. Giving Resembles a Harvest

“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has

decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

The critical thing that I had to understand, as a Christian was that God would provide all I needed and I am so thankful that I got that lesson right with that first paycheck. He provides for me and that is not my self-sufficiency, it is an uncommon generosity.

9. Giving has Symbolic Significance

“As it is written: He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

This offering carries on through the years. When we teach it, when we live it out, we’re living out the symbolic significance of this first offering that Paul took up for the church in Jerusalem.

10. Giving Promotes Thanksgiving to God

“Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supporting the needs of God’s people, but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.”

“Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

So these two magnificent chapters which some might look at and say, “Oh it’s just business, he’s just doing business”. Paul wraps it up and says, “Here is the Son, the greatest gift”. All of this is just a shadow of that gift.

That’s what we’re engaged in whether we’re involved in the process of giving or the process of fundraising.

Biblical Basis of Giving – Part II

Rob Martin

“Joy is the serious business of heaven”, said C.S. Lewis.

In Philippians Paul writes, *“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

Some of the very deepest mysteries of Christ are expressed in the joy of the bridegroom for his bride. John the Baptist’s testimony as reported by the Apostle John in John 3:29 (NIV) says, *“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine and it is now complete.”*

There is a beautiful picture in Revelation that the good deeds of the children of God are the very threads of the wedding dress of the bride. This isn’t just an act of giving money, it’s an act of participating with you in creating the dress of the bride of God and that is the joy at First Fruit. And you’re completing our joy by doing your work and allowing us to give to you. So without you, we are nothing. Without you taking the money, we are nothing. Our money is just money; it’s worthless in and of itself. It’s someone taking it and making something happen that makes it of great value. If you’re an investor and you want to make money, you have to give your money to someone who takes it and makes something happen and gives you a return over and above what you gave to them. That’s what giving is all about.

When a donor organization, through its work, helps the church reach her fullness, it not only enters into the bridegroom’s joy, but the bride’s joy as well. First Fruit staff is profoundly motivated when we realize that in our vocation we, along with the First Fruit family, can enter into Christ’s joy or in a sense “communion”, as the bride. Henri Nouwen calls this a “new communion”, saying when we ask people for money to strengthen or expand the work of the Kingdom; we are also inviting them into a new spiritual communion. Giving is the other side of asking for money and when a donor does this, they are beginning the process of entering into this new communion.

CLASS DISCUSSION: When I teach this concept, sometimes the question may rise, “Well, you’re unusual”. I say, “No, we’re a product of you. We’re only as good as you make us.” If your donors aren’t acting this way, help them understand this. If they don’t want to be in a

communion with you, you don't need them. As much as you think you need them, you really don't need people that disparage giving you money and don't understand these principles. You need God much more.

For me, the joy of working at the Rescue Mission wasn't scratching around finding money from people who were begrudging giving it or from the government which had other strings attached to it. For me, the joy was seeing the tears in their eyes at the graduation ceremonies of the New Life Program at the Rescue Mission made it all worth it. Seeing the donors tear up when they saw street people go from near death to a recovered life and realizing that they had a part in that, there was a communion going on there that was unshakable. It's very powerful and that is engaged in our work. That is what you engage in when you raise funds.

Paul, writing in his letter to the church in Rome [Romans 8:22-23 NIV] tells us, *"We know that the whole creation until this time has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."*

"This groaning, Henri Nouwen says, "Comes from deep within us and indeed from all of creation. It is the sound of our yearning for communion with God and one another. A communion that transcends the limitations of time and space."

So here we're speaking of communion and this fundraising is really a communion between us, the receiver of the gift and the person that benefits from the activity of the receiver of the gift. We're all in this community together and this is the power of being part of God's enterprise in the Kingdom. That's what takes it out of just good works. There's nothing wrong with good works. Generosity is always a blessing. This is just over and above.

The language of have and have not and its' associated practices endemic to fundraising are wholly inappropriate to how we relate to our community. This new paradigm has many factors, however, one of the most important is an understanding that in the act of giving, we are engaged on a level plane where there is neither have or have not, but two parts of the body joined in a communion of joy. There are no artificial limits on what can be accomplished, or experienced or exchanged. There can be abundance and scarcity on both our parts and there must be recognition that we need each other. We are, after all, engaged in a common task with a common outcome as our goal.

As Paul, writing to the 2 Corinthians in Chapter 8, verses 14 and 15 (NIV) said, *"At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn, their plenty will supply what you need, then there will be equality as it is written, he who gathered much did not have too much and he who gathered little did not have too little."* This sentence, "we are all engaged in a common task with a common outcome as our goal" is a hard-won truth on my part.

CLASS DISCUSSION: When I first started in this work, I felt the “dollar out the door” was my outcome—the outcome I was driving towards— and I was judged on it. For me, I see us having this common outcome. It’s what we’re doing, it’s what you’re doing, and that we are as invested in that outcome as you are and need to be as responsible for it as you are. We need to be as free in letting you work toward that outcome as we possibly can be—there is accountability in communion, a trust that has to be built among ourselves. So, it’s not just “the dollars are now yours” and now it’s up to you, because it’s true the dollars are yours and you can do what you want with them. But that is why if you have a passion for the donor you have a passion to be in this communion and to be responsible with the dollars that you’re given and to be accountable. Accountability shows that I trust you and that I’m on an equal plane with you. It’s not paternalism. I refuse to have people put that on me, that when I ask you for accountability, I’m accountable too; we’re accountable to each other. I call you into account, you call me into account when I miss the mark—it’s part of what we do at First Fruit.

A friend, Dwight Gibson, Senior Vice President of a large giving organization says, “In the body of Christ there is a New Jerusalem. There is a community of believers that is bigger than ethnicity, bigger than our passport countries, bigger than our education, bigger than our amounts of money we have or are perceived to have or not have. In this new community we believe the fruit of wise stewardship is joy. This New Jerusalem is a place of dignity for all who participate.”

In a dysfunctional model of giving, the poor receive a trickle down of resources from the perceived generous. In a new communion model, a mutual giving and receiving between grantor and grantee exists. The donor, while integral to the process, simply serves to add value. In doing this, we seek to ensure that we have given dignity to both grantee and joy to the donor, and helped through investments, both wise and passionate, to create living stones for the New Jerusalem.

That is what we are all engaged in here, when we are fundraising and when we are giving.