

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON FUNDRAISING

Introduction – money – it's use:

One of the most emotive subjects for many people is money! Families, couples, groups – can all be getting along swimmingly, then someone starts talking about money – how it should be used, how it should be earned, it's priority, even it's 'sinfulness'. Suddenly, folk can become unreasonable, annoyed and even violent!

However we view it – the need to trade utilising some form of 'legal tender' is agreed and acknowledged in virtually every culture. It's not surprising therefore that Jesus, who entered the very heart of our culture and life, had a lot to say about money too. Indeed the Bible overall has lot's to say about money – here are just a few quotes:

“who lends his **money** without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken”.

[Psalm 15:4-5](#) – about the ethical use of money and showing kindness to those in need without taking advantage (listen loan sharks!);

“Dishonest **money** dwindles away, but he who gathers **money** little by little makes it grow”.

[Proverbs 13:10-12](#) – ethical earning plus the sense and prudence of saving – even a little.

“Whoever loves **money** never has **money** enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless”.

[Ecclesiastes 5:9-11](#) – If money is our goal – we will never be satisfied. Working to support an extravagant lifestyle will drain and de-focus us – our life will ultimately have no purpose.

“For this is what the LORD says: "You were sold for nothing, and without **money** you will be redeemed.”

[Isaiah 52:2-4](#) – There are some things that money simply cannot buy – of course the ultimate is our redemption (“buying back”) from slavery to sin.

Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and **Money**”.

[Matthew 6:23-25](#) – What is our priority – our agenda or the Lord's? It may well be that the Lord wants to bless us with riches – however, our subsequent use of them will be judged.

[*Jesus at the Temple*] Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the **money** changers and the benches of those selling doves.

[Matthew 21:11-13](#) – Using God's house for illegal trading, infuriated Jesus. The passage initially would appear to condemn people 'trading' – but Jesus points out in the verses that followed that they were making it a 'den of robbers' – suggesting that the trading was also illegal & immoral – perhaps against such as the psalm and proverb quoted above. As the NT moves away from the physical 'temple' and focuses on the people being God's dwelling and 'Holy temple' (Ephesians 2) – this presents an interesting challenge – particularly as today, each week, we turn a 'trading place' into a 'house of prayer'. This 'reverse' of the Matthew 21 scenario is encouraging as we consider it under God's plan to redeem His fallen creation and to, '..bring all things together under one head, even Christ' (Eph 1:10).

Other references:

Mark 12:13-17 – 'Paying taxes to Caesar' – believers fall under the tax and monetary regulations of the place they live. They are to honour the laws and regulations in their land, including those pertaining to money (see also Romans xxx).

Mark 12:41-43 – 'The Widows offering' – Jesus emphasising 'sacrificial giving' over and above the actual 'amount' we give.

Luke 14:28 – 'Building a tower' – Jesus talks about the importance of being shrewd and thoughtful (not tight!) about how we spend our money – ensuring we maximise it's use – (not that we make faith redundant!). The context of this was 'the cost of being a disciple' – Jesus was emphasising the need to understand, to stop and think about 'the cost' before jumping in.

Acts 5:2-4 – 'Ananias and Sapphira' – they kept back money that was rightly to be given to the Lord's work – yet the Lord knew. We cannot rob God and get away with it.

1 Cor 16:1-3 – The importance of setting aside a weekly sum (in keeping with our income) for God's work.

1 Tim 6:10 – It is the 'love' of money (not money itself) which is the root of all 'evil'

References to 'tithes' – (there are many more!) – Lev 27:30-32, Num 18:21-28, Deut 12:1-17, Deut 14:22-28, 2 Chron 31:1-12, Nehem ch10-13, Malachi 3:7-10

Supporting other churches & Missionaries:

2 Cor 8, 1 Cor 16:2-4, 2 Cor 9:5, Phil 4:10, Phil 4:18,

The Church's use of Money:

Several things can be seen from the many references quoted:

- Money itself is not evil
- Money is to be used ethically
- Money is not to be our focus
- Money is to be set aside for God's work
- God's people elsewhere are to be supported
- Our giving is honoured when it is sacrificial
- We are to operate within the legal boundaries of our land
- The Lord knows and sees our giving
- Saving and good stewardship is commended

Raising Money for God's Work:

There are many instances throughout the scriptures of God's people needing to raise money for the use and purpose of the Lord's work, worship and service. Though there are varying views as to the 'how' and 'who from' when it comes to fund raising for God's work.

On the individual worksheets – detailing the biblical scenarios – consider and answer the following questions:

- 1) Who was asking for the money?**
- 2) What was the purpose?**
- 3) Who did they ask?**
- 4) Were there any constraints as to its use?**

General Wealth to all:

Psalm 24:1 tells us, *'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it'*. The Apostle Paul, to the pagans at Lystra & Derbe, could say, *"Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy – Acts 14:8-18.*

These scriptures reveal God as the graceful giver and initiator of all good things. His *common grace* is given to all, believers and pagans alike. Many passages in the Scriptures warn against trusting in wealth and material possessions alone (Eccl 5:9-11, Matt 6:23-25). If the 'earth is the Lord's' – then as its Sovereign 'landlord' – He can reclaim and redeem it (as indeed He promises to (Eph 1:10). God's people as His 'heirs' – are its inheritors.

Church Fund Raising - A Biblical Case Study? Just the Church?

We find the first instance of fundraising in the early church at Acts 11:29-30 (context – Acts 11:19-30). The Jerusalem Church had fallen into dire financial straits and was thus made the focus of a special relief project. The reason for the church's impoverished state is traced back to its birth. The original church was mainly comprised of Jews and Jewish pilgrims that travelled from all around the Roman Empire to celebrate Pentecost in Jerusalem. Recorded in Acts 2, these Jewish "Christians" were among the 3,000 that miraculously became followers of Christ at one time. They stayed and formed the first congregation of believers in Jerusalem. Their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Messiah brought shame, persecution, and rejection from other Jews. Unable to make a living, these Jewish converts relied on one another for housing and resources. The believers of the Jerusalem church were true givers. Knowing that everything they had belonged to God, these believers sold all they had in order to help one another.

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." (Acts 2:44-45)

Their love and generosity sustained the church, but soon all their land and possessions were used up. The Jerusalem church was now in real need of help. To that end, Paul made the Jerusalem church the focus of a special relief project. A collection was made from all the other churches throughout the Mediterranean region. Paul's letter to the Corinthians gives us some insight into proper church fund raising.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me." (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

Church Fund Raising - The Biblical Principles:

From Paul's letters we see that "fundraising" is not only legitimate for the church, but it's also a corporate undertaking. Paul says "let everyone" contribute. Once a true need arises, it is part of every believer's responsibility to help. Poverty does not exempt a believer from giving. As revealed by the poor widow who gave her two "insignificant" coins, it's the heart that God is concerned about, not the amount (see Mark 12:40-44).

Paul further answers the question "How much do we give?" Believers should give "as God has prospered him." The Bible does not command believers to give a fixed amount; rather, it is up to us to decide how much. What matters most to God is that we give with a genuine cheerful heart (see 2 Corinthians 9:7).

We also learn that it's fitting for believers to save up so that they are able to give. Paul tells the Corinthians to "lay by him in store" on a weekly basis. Giving involves planning and sacrifice; personal wants must be put aside. We give to God what is valuable, not what's left after we have fulfilled our own wants and desires. Furthermore, Paul adds that when money is involved, it is the congregation's responsibility to "approve" of trustworthy men to be in charge of overseeing the funds. Acts 6:2-3 also highlights the importance of electing Godly men to oversee money collection in the church.

The call to help the church in Jerusalem was made specifically towards believers. Though not explicitly stated, **one can infer that church fund raising is restricted to the church. Do you agree?** Read the challenge on the NT Case study sheet below.

CASE STUDY 1 - New Testament – Should just the Church give?

Read Acts 11:27-30 and

1 Corinthians 16:1- 4:

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me." (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

answer the 4 questions below:

Who was asking for the money?

What was the purpose?

Who did they ask?

Were there any constraints as to its use?

Consider the following AFTER you have answered the 4 questions:

How much does Paul suggest we give in 1 Cor 16:1-4?

What does 'laying something aside' (or 'set aside a sum of money') – vs 1 mean?

Do you think this is a good argument for money to be sought ONLY from Christians?

What is the danger of using a single passage or example within scripture to lay down our own principles as individuals or as a church for various matters?

MOSES:

Exodus 25

Offerings for the Tabernacle

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. ³ These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ⁵ ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; ⁶ olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; ⁷ and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. ⁸ Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹ Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

Read Exodus 35:4 – 36:7

Read how Moses communicated this and the subsequent response – and answer the 4 questions below:

Who was asking for the money?

What was the purpose?

Who did they ask?

Were there any constraints as to its use?

Consider the following **after** you have answered the 4 questions as a group:

What do you think of Exod 36:6? – the people had to be restrained from giving too much!

Notice how Moses communicates exactly what God told him – he doesn't use 'guilt' or manipulation. He stresses the need as it is – and asks the people to search their hearts.

The text mentions two types of givers, those 'willing' and those whose hearts were 'stirred up' (Exod 35:21) – when God moves us to give – we are generous – just like Him.

The leaders can be criticized – as they should really 'lead by example', giving first, not last.

Note the process: God details the need, God tells how to use the supplies, God prompts Moses to ask, God prompts people to respond, the people give, the gifts are used to glorify God

DAVID:

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1-20

Read how David communicated his request and the subsequent response – and answer the 4 questions below:

Who was asking for the money?

What was the purpose?

Who did they ask?

Were there any constraints as to its use?

Consider the following **after** you have answered the 4 questions as a group:

David challenged the older generation to give for the benefit of the younger – for future generations of worshippers – vs1

David's giving was sacrificial – vs 2

The leader's then followed his example – vs6

The leader's example encouraged the people – vs9

David praised God for His greatness – vs10-12

David acknowledged it was all God's anyway – vs14-16

God test our hearts and seeks integrity – giving us opportunity to demonstrate it through giving

David prayed that his son, Solomon would have the wholehearted servant heart to see the project through – vs19

The people worshipped – vs20

As God's people – we are called to give to the 'ongoing' work of God – and not just to the things that we personally may benefit from in the 'here and now'. The Older generations in this passage, were asked to give to the building of the temple, which would be done by David's son – Solomon.

Such giving is 'visionary' – giving to God's ongoing work.

Giving starts with God's people.

NEHEMIAH:

Read all of Nehemiah chapter 1 & 2:

Read how Nehemiah communicated his request and the subsequent response – and answer the 4 questions from below:

Who was asking for the money?

What was the purpose?

Who did they ask?

Were there any constraints as to its use?

Consider the following **after** you have answered the 4 questions as a group:

Artaxerxes is a pagan King (Persia)

Nehemiah approaches the Lord before putting his request forward

It is God who moves in the hearts of all concerned – Nehemiah, the King

Nehemiah carries out a thorough assessment of the project need himself

ZERUBBABEL:

Read Ezra chapter 3:

Answer the 4 questions from below:

Who was asking for OR giving the money?

What was the purpose?

Who did they ask?

Were there any constraints as to its use?

Consider the following **after** you have answered the 4 questions as a group:

Read Ezra chapter 4:1-4

In verse 2 – the request for help, on face value, seems reasonable - why might it have been refused?

Were the suspicions of God's people correct? – read vs 3-4

The building work was temporarily stopped (Ezra 4) due to opposition. So God's people wrote to Darius (Persian King) in Ezra 5 – to appeal for his help in re-starting the building.

Read Ezra 6:1-10 – Darius's response: note his contribution in verses 8-10 and also his very different motives (10) compared to the 'enemies' of God's people in Ezra 4.

What does this say about how WE might assess any offers of help for projects?

CONCLUDING PRINCIPLES: WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM THE SCRIPTURES:

- All things are God's and are gifts from Him;
- God's people must give out of their resources first;
- The giving for God's work must be exemplified by the Leaders first;
- God's people should be sacrificial givers;
- When God's people get opportunity, as He leads – they can boldly approach, even a pagan government for assistance – God can work in their hearts too;
- The motives of those who offer help must be assessed;
- All giving must be in order to glorify God;
- He must receive the praise when our prayers and project plans are answered;
- Church fund raising is biblical and necessary. As Christians, we should give, and give generously. However, giving also involves a great deal of discernment and wisdom. The Bible tells us to "Test everything, hold on to the good" (1 Thess 5:21). Any type of fundraising activity needs to be tested against the scriptures;
- Giving should always be voluntary. Christians are exhorted to give as part of their spiritual growth, but never forced to give in any amount or way(see 2 Corinthians 9:6-7);
- Biblical giving should be proportional to one's income. Giving beyond one's ability or to the point of debt is unbiblical and can lead to financial issues. This is not to say that God won't test our faith and ask us to give more than usual, but scripture clearly instructs us to give out of what God has already given to us (see 2 Corinthians 8:11-12);
- Biblical giving entails accountability. It is important to know how His money will be used to benefit the Kingdom. Paul made sure the churches appointed Godly men from their congregation to oversee the distribution of the funds, so no one could doubt the integrity of the projects (see 2 Corinthians 8:18-21);
- Biblical giving is always motivated by love - love for God and love for others. Love was the primary motivation for the collection made by the early church (see 2 Corinthians 8:24);

Giving also demands great faith. Giving of our resources reflects our trust in God's provision. Our faith and reliance on God is increased when we are able to give and see God's faithfulness. God wants us to put our total trust in Him and not find our security in money and possessions. God is indeed all-powerful, and He needs nothing from us. However, He helps us grow in spiritual maturity by inviting us to play a part in His plans and purposes through our giving.