

Thoughts on Fundraising in the Bible

I love asking people for money! I'm convinced it can be one of *the* best ministries in the world. Not everyone agrees. Almost every time I've told pastors that I love asking people for money they say, "Thank God *you* like doing that! I hate talking about money. I'm sure glad someone enjoys it."

Imagine their surprise when I tell them that even biblical heroes like Moses, David, Hezekiah, and Paul were fundraisers! Each of them asked people to financially support God's work—and their asking is recorded in the Bible.

I think most Christians think money is "dirty" or "less than spiritual." Did you know that Jesus had more to say about money than about most other things that we talk about in church? Money gets right into the real stuff of our lives—our time, energy, and creativity. Even though we spend a large portion of our waking hours making, but comparatively few seem to know how to handle it.

Asking for money is a way to advance the kingdom. There's no greater joy than seeing someone invest in something they deeply care about. This article isn't about financial stewardship; plenty of wonderful books on that topic are already on the market. I've listed some of those at the end of this article. My goal in this article is to help free us from some of our preconceived notions that hinder us and give us an informed biblical framework for asking for money. I hope it's used by both practitioners and for volunteers. I hope it will inspire millions of believers—lay and clergy—to begin the exciting journey of fundraising!

Stories of Fundraising in the Bible

Let's start this journey by looking at how money was raised in the Bible. I'm not sure it's really appropriate to try to develop a specific model of biblical fundraising because these stories are so different. But I do think we can pull out some tips or principles that will free us up raise money for God's work in a way pleasing to Him.

This *is* a long article. That's because I've included the large portions of biblical text of the stories so you can see that I'm not throwing you any curve balls or making any of this up. I'm indebted to Whitney Kuniholm for drawing my attention to most of these stories.

Moses—The Text

Exodus 25, 35, & 36 :: New English Translation (NET)

Exodus 25:1-9

25:1 The Lord spoke to Moses: 25:2 “Tell the Israelites to take an offering for me; from every person whose heart makes him willing you are to receive my offering. 25:3 This is the offering you are to receive from them: gold, silver, bronze, 25:4 blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goat’s hair, 25:5 ram skins dyed red, fine leather, acacia wood, 25:6 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for fragrant incense, 25:7 onyx stones, and other gems to be set in the ephod and in the breastpiece. 25:8 Let them make for me a sanctuary, that I may live among them. 25:9 According to all that I am showing you—the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings—you must make it exactly so.

Exodus 35: 4 – 36:7

35:4 And Moses spoke to all the community of the Israelites, “This is the word that the Lord has commanded: 35:5 ‘Take from you an offering for the Lord. Let everyone who has a willing heart bring an offering to the Lord, gold, silver, bronze, 35:6 blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, fine linen, goat’s hair, 35:7 ram’s skins dyed red, fine leather, acacia wood, 35:8 olive oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 35:9 onyx stones, and other gems for mounting on the ephod and the breastpiece. 35:10 And every skilled person among you is to come and make all that the Lord has commanded: 35:11 the tabernacle with its tent, its covering, its clasps, its frames, its crossbars, its posts, and its bases; 35:12 the ark, with its poles, the propitiatory lid, and the veil that conceals; 35:13 the table with its poles and all its vessels, and the bread of the Presence; 35:14 the lampstand for the light and its accessories, its lamps, and oil for the light; 35:15 and the altar of incense with its poles, and the anointing oil, and the fragrant incense, and the hanging for the door at the entrance of the tabernacle; 35:16 the altar for the burnt offering with its bronze grating that is on it, its poles, and all its utensils; the laver and its pedestal; 35:17 the hangings of the courtyard, its posts and its bases, and the curtain for the gateway to the courtyard; 35:18 tent pegs for the tabernacle and tent pegs for the courtyard and their ropes; 35:19 the woven garments for serving in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments for his sons to minister as priests.”

35:20 So all the community of the Israelites went out from the presence of Moses. 35:21 And they came forward—every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whose spirit was willing; they brought the offering for the Lord for the work of the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. 35:22 And they came forward, men and women alike, all who had willing hearts; they brought brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments, all kinds of gold jewelry, and every one who waved a wave offering of gold to the Lord.

35:23 And every one who had blue or purple or scarlet yarn, or fine linen, or goats’ hair, or rams’ skin dyed red, or fine leather, brought them. 35:24 Everyone making an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the Lord, and everyone who had acacia wood for any work of the service brought it. 35:25 And every woman who was skilled spun with her hands, and brought what she had spun, blue, or purple, or scarlet yarn, or fine linen. 35:26 And all the women whose heart stirred them up and who were skilled, spun goats’ hair.

35:27 And the leaders brought onyx stones, and other gems for mounting for the ephod and the breastpiece; 35:28 and spices, and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense.

35:29 The Israelites brought a freewill offering to the Lord, every man and woman whose heart was willing to bring for all the work which the Lord had commanded them to do through Moses.

35:30 Then Moses said to the Israelites, “See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 35:31 He has filled him with the Spirit of God—with skill, with understanding, with knowledge, and with all kinds of work, 35:32 to design artistic designs, to work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, 35:33 and in cutting stones for their setting, and in cutting wood, to do work in every artistic craft. 35:34 And he has put it in his heart to teach, he and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. 35:35 He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as craftsmen, designers, embroiderers in blue and purple and scarlet yarn and in fine linen, and weavers. They are craftsmen in all the work and artistic designers.

36:1 “So Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person in whom the Lord has put skill and ability to know how to do all the work of the service of the sanctuary, are to do the work according to all that the Lord has commanded.” 36:2 Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person in whom the Lord had put skill—everyone whose heart stirred him up to volunteer for the work, to do it. 36:3 And they received from Moses all the offering the Israelites had

brought to do the work of the service of the sanctuary, and they still brought him a freewill offering each morning. 36:4 So all the skilled people who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came from their work they were doing, 36:5 and told Moses, "The people are bringing much more than is needed for the service of the work which the Lord commanded us to do."

36:6 Moses instructed them to take his message throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman do any more work for the offering for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing any more. 36:7 Now the materials were more than enough for them to do all the work.

Moses—Observations

What an amazingly successful capital campaign! Have you ever had to restrain people from giving?! May we all have this problem! One of the most amazing things to me about this text is the emphasis on the lack of manipulation in Moses' appeal. God clearly told Moses to "take an offering for me; from every person whose heart makes him willing" (Ex 25:1). And Moses' solicitation (Ex 35:4-9) is exactly what God told him to ask for, word-for-word (Ex 25:3-7). He faithfully detailed the needed gifts and the ways that those gifts were to be used. The requirement that only those "whose heart makes him willing" were to give is significant. This fundraising drive came *after* the golden calf debacle. The people knew they'd been wrong and could've been easily manipulated to give out of guilt. But God wasn't interested in that kind of giving.

I'm impressed by the variety of gifts Moses asked for. What I like about it is that really anyone could participate. Of course they were in the desert so there wouldn't have been that much need of money! I'm also impressed by the multiplicity of skills were resident in the people that had been slaves in Egypt. I'm sure that's true of the people in our congregations and the supporters of our organizations too.

The rabbis comment on the difference in those "whose heart stirred him up" and those "whose spirit was willing" (Ex 35:21). Those who were willing, they say, brought what was required. This is good. But those whose heart stirred them were more generous, giving more than their obligation. This was the better way. The sages also criticize the leaders. The leaders are mentioned later in this section so they apparently held back. They probably had good intentions in waiting—wanting to make up what ever would be lacking from the people's giving—but they fell short of their position since leaders should give first. Fortunately, they make up for this in Numbers 7.

The people responded incredibly well to Moses' obedient solicitation. If you go on and read all of chapter 25, you'll see the very specific detail God gave Moses in how the gifts were to be used. And there's an equally detailed account of how the gifts were used and who led the effort in Ex 35 & 36.

It's interesting that it's specifically recorded that the offering was made to the Lord, *not* to the tabernacle. In fact, this story is remarkably God-centered. God is present in every step of the process:

- God details the need;
- God tells how to use the supplies;
- God prompts Moses to ask for the supplies;
- God prompts certain people to respond;

- the people give to God;
- the gifts are used to glorify God by craftsmen God gifted.

Some Fundraising Take Aways

I think that this story illustrates the importance of asking God to show us our organization's needs and to then faithfully share them with our constituents. When they're asked by a leader obeying God—neither understating nor overstating—the people responded by giving more than enough to finish the work. For me, this clearly shows that God is intimately involved with every step in the solicitation.

David—The Text

1 Chronicles 29:1-20 :: New English Translation (NET)

29:1 King David said to the entire assembly: "My son Solomon, the one whom God has chosen, is just an inexperienced young man, and the task is great, for this palace is not for man, but for the Lord God. 29:2 So I have made every effort to provide what is needed for the temple of my God, including the gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, as well as a large amount of onyx, settings of antimony and other stones, all kinds of precious stones, and alabaster. 29:3 Now, to show my commitment to the temple of my God, I donate my personal treasure of gold and silver to the temple of my God, in addition to all that I have already supplied for this holy temple. 29:4 This includes three thousand units of gold from Ophir and seven thousand units of refined silver for overlaying the walls of the buildings, 29:5 for gold and silver items, and for all the work of the craftsmen. Who else wants to contribute to the Lord today?"

29:6 The leaders of the families, the leaders of the Israelite tribes, the commanders of units of a thousand and a hundred, and the supervisors of the king's work contributed willingly. 29:7 They donated for the service of God's temple five thousand units and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand units of silver, eighteen thousand units of bronze, and one hundred thousand units of iron. 29:8 All who possessed precious stones donated them to the treasury of the Lord's temple, which was under the supervision of Jehiel the Gershonite. 29:9 The people were delighted with their donations, for they contributed to the Lord with a willing attitude; King David was also very happy.

29:10 David praised the Lord before the entire assembly:

"O Lord God of our father Israel, you deserve praise forevermore! 29:11 O Lord, you are great, mighty, majestic, magnificent, glorious, and sovereign over all the sky and earth! You have dominion and exalt yourself as the ruler of all. 29:12 You are the source of wealth and honor; you rule over all. You possess strength and might to magnify and give strength to all. 29:13 Now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your majestic name.

29:14 "But who am I and who are my people, that we should be in a position to contribute this much? Indeed, everything comes from you, and we have simply given back to you what is yours. 29:15 For we are resident foreigners and nomads in your presence, like all our ancestors; our days are like a shadow on the earth, without security. 29:16 O Lord our God, all this wealth, which we have collected to build a temple for you to honor your holy name, comes from you; it all belongs to you. 29:17 I know, my God, that you examine thoughts and are pleased with integrity. With pure motives I contribute all this; and now I look with joy as your people who have gathered here contribute to you. 29:18 O Lord God of our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, maintain the motives of your people and keep them devoted to you. 29:19 Make my son Solomon willing to obey your commands, rules, and regulations, and to complete building the palace for which I have made preparations."

29:20 David told the entire assembly: "Praise the Lord your God!" So the entire assembly praised the Lord God of their ancestors; they bowed down and stretched out flat on the ground before the Lord and the king.

David—Observations

Praise and thanksgiving—the natural result of willing giving. Isn't that inspiring? Where Moses' appeal was to all of the people, David's appeal seems to be directed at the leaders (1 Chron 29:9). I believe this story shows a God-honoring way to use an individual donor as an example for others to follow. David clearly uses his position as an example for the other leaders to follow (1 Chron 29:5).

I think this is one of the most uncomfortable parts of fundraising for Christians. I think it's because of Jesus' admonition in Matthew 6:

6:1 "Be careful not to display your righteousness merely to be seen by people. Otherwise you have no reward with your Father in heaven. 6:2 Thus whenever you do charitable giving, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in synagogues and on streets so that people will praise them. I tell you the truth, they have their reward. 6:3 But when you do your giving, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 6:4 so that your gift may be in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.

How can we reconcile David's example and Jesus' warning? Matthew 6 is the beginning of Jesus' correcting the three major practices of the life of the Pharisees: almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. In teaching on almsgiving—giving to the poor, Jesus is teaching a lesson familiar in rabbinic teaching: *giving should never be done at the expense of the recipient*. I'm indebted to pastor Frank Siciliano for pointing this out to me. According to Second Temple Period scholar David Bivin, Mishna states there was a "secret chamber" at the Temple for the giving and receiving of alms (Shekalim 5:6). That way the recipients of alms could take what they needed and retain their dignity.

If you're giving alms—giving to the poor—to be seen by people, you're humiliating the recipient of your gift. You're robbing them of their dignity. God has no patience for that. You're giving to be puffed up at the expense of another. People that do that "have their reward" (Mt 6:2).

Jesus doesn't say to do *all* giving privately, only almsgiving. He commends the practice of tithing, but he never says to tithe in secret. In fact he had his disciples watch people publicly give their gifts at the Temple and praised the gift of the old woman.

It's also interesting to note that Jesus does *not* tell us to avoid doing our acts of righteousness before men. He simply tells us to not do them "merely to be seen by people." Obviously the motivation of our heart is key (1 Chron 29:17).

David's prayer shows the lack of pride in his presentation. As with the previous story, God is the source and recipient of all giving. "But who am I and who are my people, that we should be in a position to contribute this much? Indeed, everything comes from you [God], and we have simply given back to you what is yours." (2 Chron 29:14). He knows he's dependent on God for all he has. And once again, the leaders don't give to David or the temple, they gave "delighted with their donations" and "contributed to the Lord with a willing attitude" (2 Chron 29:9).

Some Fundraising Take Aways

Rather than trying to gain praise, David gives the praise to God and leads the people in praising God. He leveraged his position to influence the giving of the leaders. Moreover, he challenged an older generation to fundraise generously on the behalf of the younger generation (1 Chron 29:1).

Hezekiah—The Text

2 Chronicles 31 :: New English Translation (NET)

31:1 When all this was over, the Israelites who were in the cities of Judah went out and smashed the sacred pillars, cut down the Asherah poles, and demolished all the high places and altars throughout Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Then all the Israelites returned to their own homes in their cities.

31:2 Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and Levites to do their assigned tasks—to offer burnt sacrifices and present offerings and to serve, give thanks, and offer praise in the gates of the Lord's sanctuary.

31:3 The king contributed some of what he owned for burnt sacrifices, including the morning and evening burnt sacrifices and the burnt sacrifices made on Sabbaths, new moon festivals, and at other appointed times prescribed in the law of the Lord. 31:4 He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to contribute the portion prescribed for the priests and Levites so they might be obedient to the law of the Lord. 31:5 When the edict was issued, the Israelites freely contributed the initial portion of their grain, wine, olive oil, honey, and all the produce of their fields. They brought a tenth of everything, which added up to a huge amount. 31:6 The Israelites and people of Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also contributed a tenth of their cattle and sheep, as well as a tenth of the holy items consecrated to the Lord their God. They brought them and placed them in many heaps. 31:7 In the third month they began piling their contributions in heaps and finished in the seventh month. 31:8 When Hezekiah and the officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the Lord and pronounced blessings on his people Israel.

31:9 When Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps, 31:10 Azariah, the head priest from the family of Zadok, said to him, "Since the contributions began arriving in the Lord's temple, we have had plenty to eat and have a large quantity left over. For the Lord has blessed his people, and this large amount remains." 31:11 Hezekiah ordered that storerooms be prepared in the Lord's temple. When this was done, 31:12 they brought in the contributions, tithes, and consecrated items that had been offered. Konaniah, a Levite, was in charge of all this, assisted by his brother Shimei. 31:13 Jechiel, Azaziah, Nachath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Machath, and Benaiah worked under the supervision of Konaniah and his brother Shimei, as directed by King Hezekiah and Azariah, the supervisor of God's temple.

31:14 Kore son of Imnah, a Levite and the guard on the east side, was in charge of the voluntary offerings made to God and disbursed the contributions made to the Lord and the consecrated items. 31:15 In the cities of the priests, Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah faithfully assisted him in making disbursements to their fellow priests according to their divisions, regardless of age. 31:16 They made disbursements to all the males three years old and up who were listed in the genealogical records—to all who would enter the Lord's temple to serve on a daily basis and fulfill their duties as assigned to their divisions. 31:17 They made disbursements to the priests listed in the genealogical records by their families, and to the Levites twenty years old and up, according to their duties as assigned to their divisions, 31:18 and to all the infants, wives, sons, and daughters of the entire assembly listed in the genealogical records, for they faithfully consecrated themselves. 31:19 As for the descendants of Aaron, the priests who lived in the outskirts of all their cities, men were assigned to disburse portions to every male among the priests and to every Levite listed in the genealogical records.

31:20 This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah. He did what the Lord his God considered good and right and faithful. 31:21 He wholeheartedly and successfully reinstated service in God's temple and obedience to the law, in order to follow his God.

Hezekiah—Observations

Again we see a leader taking the lead in giving! This is the first of our examples to refer to “tithing.” Though tithing became a temple tax, tithing is ancient practice that predates the temple and even the giving of Torah as seen in Abraham’s giving a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20).

Did you notice the some of the same themes being repeated in this story?

- People freely giving.
- Gifts being “heaped” up.

- More than enough coming in.

This went on for *four months!* So much came in that they had to build storehouses to keep it all!

Some Fundraising Take Aways

What's interesting here is that Hezekiah, a "secular" leader, publicly takes up the cause of the temple and the priests. Wouldn't it be great if lay leaders in the congregation made a public stand for the support of their church facilities and the welfare of their pastors and their pastors' families? What if, like Hezekiah, they openly announced their financial commitment in front of the congregation? I bet we'd see a lot less pastor burn-out, a lot more debt-free church property, and the full funding of Kingdom-expanding initiatives.

Nehemiah—The Text

Nehemiah 1 & 2 :: New International Version (NIV)

1:1 These are words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah:

It so happened that in the month of Kislev, in the twentieth year, I was in Susa the citadel. 1:2 Hanani, who was one of my relatives, along with some of the men from Judah, came to me, and I asked them about the fugitive Jews who remained from the exile and about Jerusalem.

1:3 They said to me, "The remnant that remains from the exile there in the province are experiencing considerable adversity and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem lies breached, and its gates have been burned."

1:4 When I heard these things I slumped down, crying and mourning for several days. I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. 1:5 Then I said, "Please, O LORD God of heaven, great and awesome God, who keeps his loving covenant with those who love him and obey his commandments, 1:6 may your ear be attentive and your eyes be open to hear the prayer of your servant that I am praying to you today throughout both day and night on behalf of your servants the Israelites. I am confessing the sins of the Israelites that we have committed against you—both I myself and my family have sinned. 1:7 We have behaved corruptly against you, not obeying the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments that you commanded your servant Moses. 1:8 Please recall the word you commanded your servant Moses: 'If you act unfaithfully, I will scatter you among the nations. 1:9 But if you repent and obey my commandments and do them, then even if your dispersed people are in the most remote location, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen for my name to reside.' 1:10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your mighty strength and by your powerful hand. 1:11 Please, O Lord, listen attentively to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who take pleasure in showing respect to your name. Grant your servant success today and show compassion to me in the presence of this man."

Now I was a cup-bearer for the king.

2:1 Then in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought to me, I took the wine and gave it to the king. Previously I had not been depressed in the king's presence. 2:2 So the king said to me, "Why do you appear to be depressed when you aren't sick? What can this be other than sadness of heart?" This made me very fearful.

2:3 I replied to the king, "O king, live forever! Why would I not be dejected in appearance when the city with the graves of my ancestors lies desolate and its gates destroyed by fire?" 2:4 The king responded, "What is it you are seeking?" Then I quickly prayed to the God of heaven 2:5 and said to the king, "If the king is so inclined and if your servant has found favor in your sight, dispatch me to Judah, to the city with the graves of my ancestors, so that I can rebuild it." 2:6 Then the king, with his consort sitting beside him, replied, "How long would your trip take, and when would you return?" Since the king was amenable to dispatching me, I gave him a time. 2:7 I said to the king, "If the king is so inclined, let him give me letters for the governors of Trans-Euphrates that will enable me to travel safely until I reach Judah, 2:8 and a letter for Asaph the keeper of the king's nature preserve, so that he will give me timber for beams for the gates of the fortress adjacent to the temple and for the wall of the city and for the home to which I go." So the king granted me these provisions, for the good hand of my God was on me. 2:9 Then I went to the

governors of Trans-Euphrates, and I presented to them the letters from the king. The king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. 2:10 When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard all this, they were very displeased that someone had come to seek benefit for the Israelites.

2:11 So I came to Jerusalem. When I had been there for three days, 2:12 I got up during the night, along with a few men who were with me. But I did not tell anyone what my God was putting on my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no animals with me, except for the one I was riding. 2:13 I proceeded through the Valley Gate by night, in the direction of the Well of the Dragons and the Dung Gate, and I was inspecting the walls of Jerusalem that had been breached and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. 2:14 I passed on to the Gate of the Well and the King's Pool, where there was insufficient space for my animal to pass with me. 2:15 I continued up the valley during the night, inspecting the wall. Then I turned and came to the Valley Gate, and so returned. 2:16 The officials did not know where I had gone or what I had been doing, for up to this point I had not told any of the Jews or the priests or the nobles or the officials or the rest of the workers. 2:17 Then I said to them, "You see the problem that we have: Jerusalem is desolate and its gates are burned. Come on! Let's rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that this reproach will not continue." 2:18 Then I related to them how the good hand of my God was on me and what the king had said to me. Then they replied, "Get going! Let's rebuild!" So they readied themselves for this good project. 2:19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite servant, and Geshem the Arab heard all this, they derided us and expressed contempt toward us. They said, "What is this you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" 2:20 I responded to them by saying, "The God of heaven will prosper us. We his servants will start the rebuilding. But you have no just or ancient right in Jerusalem."

Nehemiah—Observations

I love this story. Pagan resources are being used for God's purposes. As in all the other stories so far, God is involved in the entire process: preparation, solicitation, successful response, and successful completion.

I appreciate Nehemiah's candor, "this made me very fearful" (Neh 2:2). Anyone who's asked for money has been scared! Despite his fear, he is incredibly bold. When he gets the promise of safe travel, he goes on to ask for the materials to accomplish his objective. Once again, as with the other stories, the response was more than enough. Not only did Artaxerxes agree, he even sent a small army with Nehemiah. Some commentators see this royal escort as an indication that Artaxerxes had even promoted him to the position of a royal governor! Nehemiah prayerfully and boldly asks for the resource to accomplish God's work. He risks death but is rewarded with abundant provision. Isn't God's favor amazing?!

This story includes a key to Nehemiah's wisdom—he keeps many of his thoughts to himself. He even conducts an assessment of the project privately by himself (Neh 2:11-16). Once he has first-hand familiarity with the details of the task, he solicits the help of the people with him. His solicitation includes a clear statement of the need *and* a testimony about God's favor already evident in this project. Once again the people respond positively and immediately.

Some Fundraising Take Aways

I think this story points to the legitimacy of asking non-Christians and the government to invest in Kingdom work. It is our first example of a solicitor fasting prior to a solicitation. And we see a fundraiser specifically asking God for His favor before and during solicitations. Once again, God is the prime mover in the fundraising process. Our requests are to build up His kingdom. And He's pleased to give us His favor in the process.

Jesus—The Text

Luke 8:1-3 :: New English Translation (NET)

8:1 Some time afterward he went on through towns and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, 8:2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and disabilities: Mary (called Magdalene), from whom seven demons had gone out, 8:3 and Joanna the wife of Cuza (Herod's household manager), Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their own resources.

Jesus—Observations

It seems striking to me that these women would be able to help “out of their own means” (Luke 8:3). In this culture, women were largely seen as property of their husbands or fathers, but they must have been well off to be giving out of their “resources.” This indicates to me that Jesus was truly open to connecting not just with the poor but with the rich as well. (And isn't it wonderfully ironic that some of Jesus' provision came from Herod's household?)

Some Fundraising Take Aways

I know, this doesn't show Jesus actually asking for money. But it does show that He and the Twelve received donor support. As a fundraiser, these few verses are extremely comforting to me. I've felt awkward raising money that will, in part, pay for my salary. But now I know Jesus received support for his work too.

Paul—The Texts

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 :: New English Translation (NET)

16:1 With regard to the collection for the saints, please follow the directions that I gave to the churches of Galatia: 16:2 On the first day of the week, each of you should set aside some income and save it to the extent that God has blessed you, so that a collection will not have to be made when I come. 16:3 Then, when I arrive, I will send those whom you approve with letters of explanation to carry your gift to Jerusalem. 16:4 And if it seems advisable that I should go also, they will go with me.

2 Corinthians 8 & 9 :: New English Translation (NET)

8:1 Now we make known to you, brothers and sisters, the grace of God given to the churches of Macedonia, 8:2 that during a severe ordeal of suffering, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in the wealth of their generosity. 8:3 For I testify, they gave according to their means and beyond their means. They did so voluntarily, 8:4 begging us with great earnestness for the blessing and fellowship of helping the saints. 8:5 And they did this not just as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and to us by the will of God. 8:6 Thus we urged Titus that, just as he had previously begun this work, so also he should complete this act of kindness for you. 8:7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, and in all eagerness and in the love from us that is in you—make sure that you excel in this act of kindness too. 8:8 I am not saying this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love by comparison with the eagerness of others. 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich, he became poor for your sakes, so that you by his poverty could become rich. 8:10 So here is my opinion on this matter: It is to your advantage, since you made a good start last year both in your giving and your desire to give, 8:11 to finish what you started, so that just as you wanted to do it eagerly, you can also complete it according to your means. 8:12 For if the eagerness is present, the gift itself is acceptable according to whatever one has, not according to what he does not have. 8:13 For I do not say this so there would be relief for others and suffering for you, but as a matter of equality. 8:14 At the present time, your abundance will meet their need, so that one day their abundance may also meet your need, and thus there may be equality, 8:15 as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

8:16 But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same devotion I have for you, 8:17 because he not only accepted our request, but since he was very eager, he is coming to you of his own accord. 8:18 And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his work in spreading the gospel 8:19 In addition, this brother has also been chosen by the churches as our traveling companion as we administer this generous gift to the glory of the Lord himself and to show our readiness to help. 8:20 We did this as a precaution so that no one should blame us in regard to this generous gift we are administering. 8:21 For we are concerned about what is right not only before the Lord but also before men. 8:22 And we are sending with them our brother whom we have tested many times and found eager in many matters, but who now is much more eager than ever because of the great confidence he has in you. 8:23 If there is any question about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; if there is any question about our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. 8:24 Therefore show them openly before the churches the proof of your love and of our pride in you.

9:1 For it is not necessary for me to write you about this service to the saints, 9:2 because I know your eagerness to help. I keep boasting to the Macedonians about this eagerness of yours, that Achaia has been ready to give since last year, and your zeal to participate has stirred up most of them. 9:3 But I am sending these brothers so that our boasting about you may not be empty in this case, so that you may be ready just as I kept telling them. 9:4 For if any of the Macedonians should come with me and find that you are not ready to give, we would be humiliated (not to mention you) by this confidence we had in you. 9:5 Therefore I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go to you in advance and to arrange ahead of time the generous contribution you had promised, so this may be ready as a generous gift and not as something you feel forced to do. 9:6 My point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. 9:7 Each one of you should give just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, because God loves a cheerful giver. 9:8 And God is able to make all grace overflow to you so that because you have enough of everything in every way at all times, you will overflow in every good work. 9:9 Just as it is written, "He has scattered widely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness remains forever." 9:10 Now God who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide and multiply your supply of seed and will cause the harvest of your righteousness to grow. 9:11 You will be enriched in every way so that you may be generous on every occasion, which is producing through us thanksgiving to God, 9:12 because the service of this ministry is not only providing for the needs of the saints but is also overflowing with many thanks to God. 9:13 Through the evidence of this service they will glorify God because of your obedience to your confession in the gospel of Christ and the generosity of your sharing with them and with everyone. 9:14 And in their prayers on your behalf they long for you because of the extraordinary grace God has shown to you. 9:15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Philippians 4:10-20 :: New English Translation (NET)

4:10 I have great joy in the Lord because now at last you have again expressed your concern for me. (Now I know you were concerned before but had no opportunity to do anything.) 4:11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content in any circumstance. 4:12 I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. 4:13 I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me. 4:14 Nevertheless, you did well to share with me in my trouble.

4:15 And as you Philippians know, at the beginning of my gospel ministry, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in this matter of giving and receiving except you alone. 4:16 For even in Thessalonica on more than one occasion you sent something for my need. 4:17 I do not say this because I am seeking a gift. Rather, I seek the credit that abounds to your account. 4:18 For I have received everything, and I have plenty. I have all I need because I received from Epaphroditus what you sent—a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, very pleasing to God. 4:19 And my God will supply your every need according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. 4:20 May glory be given to God our Father forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 :: New English Translation (NET)

6:17 Command those who are rich in this world's goods not to be haughty or to set their hope on riches, which are uncertain, but on God who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. 6:18 Tell them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous givers, sharing with others. 6:19 In this way they will save up a treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the future and so lay hold of what is truly life.

Paul—Some Observations

Paul certainly has a lot to say about giving! This is in no way meant to be an exhaustive study of the approaches he uses and all the theological implications that can be derived from his writing. As with the previous stories, I simply want to draw out some of the observations my clients and I have made about his approach to asking for money.

First, Paul is using a format very common to us today—donor appeal letters. The passage from 1 Corinthians shows a reasoned, logical, proportional approach to systematic giving (1 Cor 16:2). Such systematic giving seems similar to today's monthly contribution programs.

The portion from 2 Corinthians seems to be addressing the problem of a stalled fundraising campaign (2 Cor 8:11; 9:3). The Corinthians made a significant pledge but haven't fulfilled that pledge. By bragging about the Macedonian churches, Paul employs competition to inspire the Corinthians to fulfill their pledge (2 Cor 8:1).

Paul uses powerful writing skills that, to me, border on manipulation. But he is quick to say that giving to God's work is to be done willingly and generously (2 Cor 8:8; 9:5, 7). He claims to not be commanding them to give but "testing the genuineness of their love" (2 Cor 8:8). He even states that giving is a sign of "your obedience to your confession in the gospel of Christ" (2 Cor 9:13).

I appreciate Paul's reassurance "I am not saying this because I am in need" (Phil 4:11). It seems to me that any ministry that regularly employs crisis tactics to raise funds should reexamine the integrity in such practices.

Some Fundraising Take Aways

Paul's instructions on to Timothy to encourage the rich to be "generous to others" highlights the tension Christian fundraisers live in. On the one hand, we have James' exhortation to not show favoritism based on net worth (James 2:1-12). But we also live in the tension of needing to be good stewards of our organization's limited resources. To be the most effective stewards of our money, we need to be aware of the people that are more able to give and focus on them. I don't think we'll ever eliminate this tension, but we must always be aware of it.

Finally, similar to the account of Moses' earlier appeal, Paul gives a detailed description of how they are being careful with the administering of the gift and the people handling it (2 Cor 8:19). As Christians asking for other people's money, we need to be prepared to offer a detailed, open book accounting for how it is used.

Review and Application

Those of us who are fundraisers are amazingly blessed. We get to follow in the footsteps of some incredible people of faith. We get to be part of a process saturated with God's presence. And the natural result of our doing our job well is people bursting out in praise and thanksgiving and abundantly supplying the need.

The following is a brief review of points that we can draw from the examples we've looked at. The list is always growing so please email me your additions at marc@fundraisingcoach.com.

- Ask God for His perspective on the need
- Relay that perspective faithfully
- Seek gifts from those giving with a willing heart
- Use your personal giving and giving of other donors as public examples
- Make sure God is the center of all of your fundraising efforts
- Fast and pray and ask for His favor
- Ask boldly from believers and nonbelievers alike
- There's no shame involved in accepting donor support, even Jesus did
- It's appropriate to use a mix of solicitation methods including mass appeals, face-to-face visits, and solicitation letters
- Encourage people to set up some form of systematic giving
- Talk about the tithe—it's no longer a Temple tax but it is still a helpful measure of giving (a good place to start; a lousy place to stop)
- Give praise to God for His faithfulness
- And be ready for the incredible release of joy and praise at the outpouring from God's people when they're asked God's way

What I love most about these stories is that, when done right, asking people to support God's work seems to often end up in a wildly enthusiastic worship service! May your fundraising end this way too!

For Further Reading

Financial Stewardship (Christian and not)

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- Willmore, Wesley K. *God and Your Stuff: The Vital Link Between Your Possessions and Your Soul*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002.

Fundraising in the Bible

- Bivin, David. "Oral Torah: Tithing." found on the web at:
<http://jerusalemerspective.com/Default.aspx?tabid=27&ArticleID=1489>
- Kuniholm, Whitney. *The Ministry of Fund Raising*. Washington, DC: Prison Fellowship Ministries, 1990
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- Bassinger, Rebekah Burch & Thomas H. Jeavons. *Growing Givers Hearts: Treating Fundraising as a Ministry*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

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Marc A. Pitman is an executive coach to nonprofit leaders and business owners. An expert in helping people identify their natural abilities, he's committed to providing down-to-earth information that will decrease stress and put the "fun" back into fundraising!

Find out how to raise money for your nonprofit, get Marc's free article "Do It Yourself Fundraising" at: <http://fundraisingcoach.com/diy.htm>

If you're interested in having Marc speak to your organization, or in learning more about his coaching and training services, he can be reached at: <http://fundraisingcoach.com/>.