

THE
BIBLICAL
FUNDRAISER
IN MODERN PRACTICE

HELPING CHRISTIANS ENJOY THEIR WEALTH



RUSSELL JAMES III

The Biblical Fundraiser in Modern Practice: Helping Christians Enjoy Their Wealth

A practical commentary on 1 Timothy 6:17-19
and companion to *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words*

Russell James III

JD, PhD, CFP®

Professor, Charitable Financial Planning, Texas Tech University
President (former), Central Christian College of the Bible

The views expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not reflect those of Texas Tech University, which has neither reviewed nor approved any content.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
lockman.org

Copyright © 2025 Russell James III

ISBN: 979-8-310-91119-2

CONTENTS

Introduction: This one is different!	1
STORY ELEMENTS: CHARACTERS, SETTING, AND BACKSTORY (IDENTITY)	
1 The people group: To those who are rich	
I. The missing ministry	17
II. Powerful fundraising practices	25
2 The ministry relationship: The authorized messenger who comes alongside	
I. The right role: <i>Parangelle</i> in practice	33
II. Wrong roles: The apologetic panhandler	49
III. Wrong roles: The always-be-closing sales machine	55
IV. Wrong roles: The sideline gawker	61
V. Wrong roles: The friend-raising socialite	67
VI. Wrong roles: The class-conflict crusader	71
VII. Wrong roles: The teeth-gritting martyr	75
3 Message 1: You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this!	
I. Telling the right fundraising story	89
II. Backstory: Identity motivates action	95
III. Fundraising backstory statements	101
4 Message 2: Let's talk about wealth!	
I. Wealth is different	113
II. Wealth sharing is different	121

III.	The past-present-future wealth conversation	135
IV.	This is about giving BIG!	145
5	Message 3: People like us enjoy doing things like this!	163
6	Message 4: Giving is more enjoyable because everything comes from God!	
I.	Origin reminders build gratitude	183
II.	The end of the beginning of the story	193

STORY ELEMENTS: THE CALL TO ADVENTURE (CHALLENGE)

7	Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!	
I.	We help rich people enjoy their wealth	209
II.	Good stewardship is fun	221
III.	Donor joy in practice and science	237
8	Message 6: Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!	
I.	Paul's interruptive fundraising message	257
II.	Paul's interruptive fundraising sounds	265
III.	The myth and truth of George Müller	273

STORY ELEMENTS: CLIMAX (VICTORY) & RESOLUTION *(ALTERED IDENTITY)*

9	Message 7: You're doing good work!	
I.	Doing good: The donor experience	291
II.	Doing good: The fundraiser experience	301
III.	Doing good: The leadership experience	309

10	Message 8: You're making beautiful things happen!	
	I. The fundraiser as art dealer	329
	II. Beautiful works are visible and compelling	339
11	Message 9: You're being an admirable person!	
	I. Admirable identity giving in research and practice	351
	II. Overcoming the barriers to admirable identity giving	361
12	Message 10: You're ready to joyfully share abundance!	
	I. Getting ready to share joyfully	377
	II. Getting ready by moving from wealth to abundance	385
13	Message 11: You're one of us!	409
14	Message 12: You're being a good partner in a great partnership!	427
15	Message 13: You're making an investment with real permanence!	445
16	Message 14: You're grabbing the best life experience!	
	I. How Paul teaches, offers, and delivers the ideal donor experience	463
	II. Barriers to delivering the ideal donor experience	481
17	Overview: What's missing from your fundraising story?	493
	About the author	517

INTRODUCTION

This one is different!

- *This is a message to the fundraiser about encouraging sharing (giving “across”).*
- *It differs from messages to the donor about almsgiving (giving “down”).*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”¹

This book is for you

The Biblical Fundraiser is a deep dive into the ancient words and modern practice of major gift fundraising. It’s for anyone interested in the work of fundraising. It’s for anyone interested in the theology of fundraising. It’s for anyone interested in the ancient history of fundraising.

Often, the original context will be one of church and ministry. But the principles are universal. That means they apply to your situation. If you’re fundraising for a church, they apply. If you’re fundraising for other ministries, they apply. If you’re fundraising for organizations that “do good” in other ways, they apply. Whatever kind of “good works” you’re promoting, Biblical fundraising applies. The ancient words are true. They show the way to effective major gifts fundraising practice.

I challenge you!

Are you ready for a challenge? More than that, are you

ready for an inspired challenge? It's a challenge from scripture. It's a challenge to minister to others. But this one – it's a little different. And it's hard. It's a challenge that is, well, challenging!

First, the bad news. You'll be working with people who are different from you. They'll likely be different from any of your current friends or family. Their lifestyles will be different. Their worries and concerns will be different. You'll have to learn new things to connect and to help. Some of these things will take time to learn. It will be hard work.

There's more bad news. Yes, this ministry is commanded by scripture. But you won't get the social prestige that comes with being a traditional minister. Your work will be stigmatized. Some won't agree with your decision to reach out to this people group. In fact, many will be offended that you're intentionally choosing to work with them.

But it's not all bad news. You'll have guidance. Scripture defines the details of this ministry. It's a ministry to a specific group. It's a ministry with a specific relationship. It's a ministry with a specific message. And the impact? The impact is unrivaled.

Of course, your work will change the lives of the people you're ministering to. That's no surprise. We see that in all ministries. But this work is different. It's different because it multiplies every other good work at your entire organization. It produces beautiful, noble results.

It's a work of contrasts. It's transformational. Yet, it's stigmatized. It's enormously impactful. Yet, it's offensive to many. It's commanded by scripture. Yet, it's often rejected by those in the modern church.

What is this work? It's the ministry of 1 Timothy 6:17-19. It's the ministry to the rich. It's the ministry of major gift fundraising.

Let me urge you to do it. Embrace this work. Accept this challenge! But first, let me offer you a little help.

This one's different

What you are about to read is an actionable, boots-on-the-ground, practical manual. It's a step-by-step handbook for achieving transformational success in fundraising. But. But it's also a word-by-word walk through 1 Timothy 6:17-19.²

That may seem odd. How can a Greek word study be practical? That's not how that's supposed to work. And why spend so much time on what is, in Greek, only one sentence?³ That's doesn't feel practical, either.

Let me explain. There are many passages in the Bible about giving. This one is different.⁴ The other passages are written to the giver. This one is not. It's written to the one who will encourage others to give. It's written to the fundraiser.

Other passages have instructions about giving. This one has instructions about fundraising. Many passages in the Bible tell the donor what to do. This one tells the fundraiser what to do. That makes this passage unique. If you're a fundraiser, this passage is your inspired playbook. It's your recipe for transformational success.

A detailed playbook

Giving is important to the church and its various ministries. So is fundraising. It should be no surprise then that

scripture has instructions not only for giving but also for fundraising. Those fundraising instructions are found here.⁵

These instructions often make more sense once we understand the actual Greek words. So, we'll look at each one. (The parallel companion book gives a more in-depth technical exegesis.⁶) But this is more than just a review of Greek words. It also reveals a truth. It shows the process for achieving transformational fundraising success. It's not just esoteric theology. It's a set of systematic instructions for the fundraiser.

These instructions work. They match the experience and advice from the most successful fundraisers. They match results from massive data analysis. They match the latest scientific evidence on effective fundraising.⁷ The Bible, it turns out, is telling you the truth!

An open mind

This passage supplies detailed, practical instructions. It will produce transformational results in fundraising. But. But you have to follow the instructions.

Why would that be a problem? Because following these instructions can feel uncomfortable. It may not match modern church culture. It may not match current attitudes or opinions.

This disconnect is often a problem for fundraising. Fundraising has a stigma.⁸ Most people don't understand it. The topic can feel uncomfortable. (Isn't the mandatory "stewardship" sermon always the least popular?)

At best, fundraising is tolerated. It's an unfortunate necessity. The attitude can become,

"I hate to do this, but we've got to fund these important works somehow."

This attitude is common. But it's not scriptural.

These Biblical instructions don't match common attitudes. They aren't comfortable. They aren't easy. But they are true. And they work.

This one's different (again)

Before we get started, one last thing is important. This passage is narrow and specific. It outlines the scriptural ministry of major gift fundraising. It does not address all types of fundraising. It does not address all types of giving. This can cause confusion.

There are different types of giving. Each type has different instructions. This was certainly true in the Old Testament. It had many different sacrifices, tithes, and offerings. The rules for each gift were different. Mixing up the rules was not allowed.

The same is true in the New Testament. There are different rules for giving "down" and sharing "across." Giving "down" might be called "almsgiving" or "giving to the poor." In Greek, this word is *eleēmosynē*. It refers to mercy, pity, or alms.

This is different from sharing "across." That word is *koinōnikos* or *koinōnias*. That is sharing within a *koinōnia*, a mutual fellowship community. Our passage references sharing: *koinōnikos*. It does not reference almsgiving: *eleēmosynē*.⁹ It is about giving "across" not giving "down."¹⁰

The words are different. So are the rules. For example, giving "down" is best done in secret. In Matthew 6:2-4, Jesus

explains,

“So, when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynē*], do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, so that they will be praised by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynē*], do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charitable giving [*eleēmosynē*] will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

Compare this with Paul’s giving “appeal letter” in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. The word *eleēmosynē* never appears there. Paul is writing about giving. But he’s writing about a different type of giving. He isn’t writing about giving “down” or almsgiving. He is writing about giving “across” or sharing. In 2 Corinthians 8:14, he explains,

“at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so that their abundance also may serve as assistance for your need, so that there may be equality”

Does Paul say to give in secret? No. He says and does the opposite. In 2 Corinthians 8:24, he writes,

“Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.”

The donation is the proof of love. It is given openly before the churches. It results in honor to the donors and glory to God. In 2 Corinthians 9:13, Paul writes,

“Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the

gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution [*koinōnias*] to them and to all.”¹¹

Paul provides massive publicity for the gift. He does this even before the donation pledge is fulfilled. He writes,

“I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I have sent the brothers, in order that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you will be prepared; otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to mention you—would be put to shame by this confidence.” (2 Corinthians 9:2b-4).

Paul didn’t just let the “left hand” know about the gift. He publicized their generosity to the entire world! He used it as a compelling “donor story” to inspire other donors.

So, is Paul contradicting Jesus? No. They are just talking about two different things.¹² In Greek, this is obvious. The words are different. Jesus speaks of *eleēmosynē*. Paul writes about *koinōnias*. These two words don’t look anything alike. The problem is that in English we often use one word for both. It’s all just “charitable giving.”

And that’s wrong. The gifts are different. The rules are different. Giving down, if done openly, can be harmful to the receiver.¹³ It’s best done in secret. Sharing across is different.¹⁴ When done openly, it can strengthen the group.¹⁵ Open giving inspires reciprocal generosity. It can inspire receivers and other group members.

If we don’t understand these differences, it causes problems. Likely, we’ll resist the instructions in this passage.

They won't "feel" right. They won't match what we've learned about "charitable giving."

Actually, they won't match what we've learned about *eleēmosynē*. They won't match because that type of gift isn't found here. Our passage is not talking about almsgiving. It's not talking about mercy, pity, or alms. It's not talking about giving "down" at all. It's talking about something different.

These instructions aren't for "charitable giving" in general. They are specific. They are instructions to encourage specific types of gifts among a specific group.

These rules aren't supposed to match those for every gift or every group. They describe the specific and narrow ministry of major gift fundraising. And they work.

An open mind (again)

The detailed instructions in this passage work. Following them leads to transformational fundraising success. But to get the results, you must follow the instructions.

Doing this can be hard. It can require adjusting some old attitudes and opinions. It can mean doing things that other people don't understand. Let's face it: effective ministry is hard work. This is no exception.

As we prepare to begin this journey, let me share some practical advice. It's advice from James. He writes,

"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves."
(James 1:22 NLT).

Do what it says. Do it, and you'll find that it works. The words are true. If you treat them like a recipe, you'll find that

the recipe works. If you become a “doer” and not just a “hearer,” the results will be awesome!

¹ This translation modifies the NASB by removing the phrase “. Instruct them”. The excised phrase is italicized in the NASB, indicating that it does not appear in the original text. The omitted period is replaced by a colon, reflecting that this is not two sentences but one continuous sentence where the phrase “for enjoyment” is elucidated by the subsequent list of infinitive phrases. (See a full discussion of this in *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.) The phrase “for enjoyment” replaces “to enjoy” in order to highlight that this is a purpose clause and not an infinitive like the subsequent “to” phrases. The term “high-minded” replaces “conceited” as it is closer to the sense of the original term *hypsēlophronein* where *hypsēlo* references “high” and *phronein* references “mind.” (Note: All Greek text is ALA-LC Romanized and italicized throughout this book including modifying quotations.)

² This use of the passage as a practical manual fits with the intended purpose of the letter and the Pastoral Epistles more generally. See, e.g., “The content of this trio of letters certainly indicates their nature as manuals or instructions for church leaders.” [Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul’s theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 142.]

³ Professor Ken Cukrowski explains, “Although most translations break 1 Timothy 6:17-19 into several sentences in English, the passage is actually one long sentence beginning with a command (‘instruct’), followed by seven infinitives (two modified with negatives), continuing with a participial phrase (‘storing up’), and concluding with a result (or purpose) clause (namely, ‘that they may take hold of the life that is truly life’).” [Cukrowski, K. (2005). Women and wealth in 1 Timothy. *Leaven*, 13(1), Article 8.]

⁴ There are several technical arguments for treating this three-verse sentence separately. Many commentators have noted its strong distinction and contrast with what precedes and follows it, calling it, e.g., “out of place” and “misplaced” [Bush, P. G. (1990). A note on the structure of 1 Timothy. *New Testament Studies*, 36(1), 152-156, 155], “jarring” [Bassler, J. M. (2011). *Abingdon New Testament commentaries: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Abingdon Press. p. 118], “out of place,” “misplaced,” and “a postscript” [Henry, M. (1935). *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible* (Vol. 6). Fleming H. Revell Publishers. p. 831] or even a “brutal” digression [Käseman, E. (1972). *Essias exégétiques*. Delachaux et Niestlé. p. 112]. One commentator attributes this to Paul’s age, writing, “It is no forger’s hand here; but the natural abruptness of old age, and of a St. Paul”. [Humphreys, A. E. (Ed.), (1897). *The epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Vol. 45). The University Press. p. 149.]

A more critical approach argues that this three-verse sentence was a separate, pre-existing instruction that was added to the letter. James Miller explains, “On the basis of the unusual vocabulary (six NT *hapax legomena*), and the awkward setting in the context, it is likely that the piece came ‘ready-made’ to an editor of the Pastorals who incorporated it here into the letter.” [Miller, J. D. (1997). *The Pastoral Letters as composite documents* (Vol. 93). Cambridge University Press. p. 94.] Note that Miller references *hypsēlophronein*, *adēlotēti*, *agathoergein*, *eumetadotous*, *koinōnikous*, and *apothēsaurizontas* as Greek words that appear nowhere else in the New Testament. However, *agathourgōn* does appear in Acts 14:17.

This suggestion of a pre-formed piece matches with other parts of the letter. “Much of the content in 1 Timothy consists of preformed material such as the doxologies (1:17; 6:15-16), the vice list (1:9-10), and confessions/hymns (2:5-6;

3:16).” [Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul’s theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 143.]

For others contending that this passage was a later addition, see, e.g., Easton, B. S. (1948). *The Pastoral Epistles: Introduction, translation, commentary and word studies*. SCM Press. p. 170; Spicq, C. (1969). *Saint Paul: Les épîtres pastorales* (4th ed.). Gabalda. p. 575.

See also, “A literary allusion: How Menander’s *Dyskolos* adds meaning,” Chapter 13-III in *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*, which reviews evidence suggesting that this passage may have been a Christianized retelling of an argument for generosity appearing in the play *Dyskolos* (at 797-817) from Menander, a popular 4th-Century B.C. playwright. [See, e.g., Collins, R. F. (2002). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 171-172; Witherington, B., III. (2006). *Letters and homilies for Hellenized Christians* (Vol I). IVP Academic. p. 297-298.] Paul quotes Menander in 1 Corinthians 15:33, demonstrating his connection to this source.

Overall, both the potential distinct origins and the unusual placement of this passage warrant its treatment as a separate entity.

⁵ As J. M. Bassler explains, “Throughout this letter the author has addressed various aspects of church management: instructions for worship (chap. 2); qualifications for leadership roles (chap. 3); admonitions to, and about, certain groups within the church (5:1—6:2), including the opposing teachers (chaps. 4, 6).” [Bassler, J. M. (2011). *Abingdon New Testament commentaries: 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Abingdon Press. p. 118.] It is thus natural that such a letter on all aspects of “church management” would include at least some instructions for fundraising.

⁶ *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.

⁷ Exploring both the rational scientific evidence and the inspired textual evidence follows with John Locke’s statement describing 1 Timothy 6:17 as “the Voice of Reason confirmed by Inspiration” [Locke, J. (1689). *Two treatises of government*, II, 31.]

⁸ Meisenbach, R. J., Rick, J. M., & Brandhorst, J. K. (2019). Managing occupational identity threats and job turnover: How former and current fundraisers manage moments of stigmatized identities. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 29(3), 383-399.

⁹ Jackson Reinhardt goes even further, arguing of 1 Timothy, “There is no discussion concerning the poor, in and out of the assembly, in the entire epistle ...” [Reinhardt, J. (2021). “God, who giveth us richly”: Wealth, authorship, and audience in 1 Timothy 6. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*, 2(1), 101-114. p. 106.]

¹⁰ Steven Friesen describes this as “Paul’s gospel called for a network of horizontal sharing among Mediterranean assemblies” [Friesen, S. J. (2008). Injustice of God’s will? Early Christian explanations of poverty. In S. R. Holman (Ed.), *Wealth and poverty in early church and society* (pp. 17-36). Baker Academic. p. 28.] John Barclay notes that in 1 Timothy “the author conceives of the church as a network of Christian households connected by mutual economic support.” [Barclay, J. M. (2020). Household networks and early Christian economics: A fresh study of 1 Timothy 5.3-16. *New Testament Studies*, 66(2), 268-287. p. 268.]

¹¹ The New American Standard Bible includes a note for “contribution” with the alternative phrasing of “Or sharing with them.” The word for “contribution” here is

koinōnias, similar to the word in 1 Timothy 6:18 for “ready to share,” *koinōnikous*.

¹² This same contrast is found in the Gospels as well. In our passage, Paul directs Timothy to instruct the rich “to be rich in good works [*ergois kalois*].” It is important to note that this version of good is from *kalos*. *Kalos* means “attractively good; good that inspires (motivates) others to embrace what is lovely (beautiful, praiseworthy); i.e., well done so as to be winsome (appealing).” [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com]. It is “an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.” [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.]

Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, “Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works [*kala erga*], and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” This is followed by a contrast in Matthew 16:1-3, “Take care not to practice your righteousness in the sight of people, to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynēn*], do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, so that they will be praised by people. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynēn*], do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”

A direct contrast is made between gifts as good works, *kala erga*, and gifts to the poor in the major gift of wealth (worth a year’s wages) in Mark 14:3-9, “She broke the vial and poured the perfume over His head. But there were some indignantly remarking to one another, ‘Why has this perfume been wasted? For this perfume could have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a good deed [*kalon ergon*] for Me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good [*eu topoiēsai*] to them; but you do not always have Me.’” Jesus’s response to this *kalon ergon* gift was not secrecy. Instead, it was massive publicity for the donor. Mark 14:9, “Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her.”

¹³ In *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck powerfully illustrates the difference between the sharing (giving “across”) system of a migrant camp and almsgiving (giving “down”). Camp community members took food from the camp supplies whenever they needed it and could give back to the camp whenever they got work. The character of Annie Littlefield explains the difference between the sharing system of the migrant camp (giving “across”), and the dangers of “charity” (giving “down”):

“If a body’s ever took charity, it makes a burn that don’t come out. This ain’t charity, but if you ever took it, you don’t forget it. I bet Jessie ain’t ever done it.”

“No, I ain’t,” said Jessie.

“Well, I did,” Annie said. “Las’ winter; an’ we was a-starvin’ ... they made us crawl for our dinner. They took our dignity. They – I hate ‘em. An’ - maybe Mis’ Joyce took charity. Maybe she didn’t know this ain’t charity. Mis’ Joad, we don’t allow nobody in this camp to build theirself up that-a-way. We don’t allow nobody to give nothing to another person. They can give it to the camp, an’ the camp can pass it out. We won’t have no charity!”

[Steinbeck, J. (1939/2014). *The grapes of wrath* (75th anniversary ed.). Viking. p.

332]

More formally, Dr. John Garr writes, “Christian giving solely out of pity or out of paternalism has often depreciated the human dignity of those who have been the object of their charity.” [Garr, J. D. (2014). *Generosity: The righteous path to divine blessing*. Golden Key Press. p. 97.]

¹⁴ In commenting on 1 Timothy 6:17, Frances Young notes, “Even the mutual reciprocity of giving and receiving has an important moral and spiritual dimension: for dignity and respect are accorded to those from whom we receive, not to those we patronise.” [Young, F. (1994). *The theology of the Pastoral Letters*. Cambridge University Press. p. 159.]

¹⁵ In his article “The Gift in Ancient Israel,” Professor Gary Stansell proposes a cross-cultural model of the gift to “minimize the ethnocentrism and anachronism of the modern reader who naturally approaches gift exchange as something in the ancient world with the Western Industrial view of the gift.” He includes the characteristic that “Gifts establish a *bond* between persons or groups or strengthen an already existing social relationship. Thus, the purpose is not simply the circulation of wealth.” (Author’s emphasis). [Stansell, G. (1999). The gift in ancient Israel. *Semeia*, 87, 65-90. pp. 68-69.]

Story Elements

Characters, Setting, and Backstory

(Identity)

Chapter 1

The people group: To those who are rich

- *Biblical fundraising is a scriptural ministry to the wealth holders.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is just a way to get quick cash to a charity.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct **those who are rich in this present world** not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life"

PART I

THE MISSING MINISTRY

Something's missing

As a matter of text analysis, the directive is clear. It's not subtle. It requires no clever hermeneutics. It commands a ministry to the wealth holders. It commands a ministry to the rich.¹ This ministry has specific messages. It has specific goals. It's a ministry for one specific group. And, in the modern church, it's a ministry that's missing.

In fact, it seems to be the only ministry that's missing. Except for this, the modern church loves ministries to specific groups. We'll easily find ministries for young marrieds, singles, seniors, youth, children, women, or men. We'll find ministries for those dealing with grief, addiction, or chronic pain. We'll find special ministries for bikers, cowboys, prisoners,

ex-convicts, working professionals, college students, or even college professors.

The modern church embraces all of these and more. But one group seemingly cannot be added to that long list. And yet it is a group specifically mentioned in scripture. It is a ministry specifically commanded by scripture. It is the ministry to the rich.

Minister to the rich

This commanded ministry is foreign to our modern church sensibilities. We might easily imagine a conversation like the following:

“Hi I’m Bob. I’m the new youth minister.”

“You’re the what?”

“The youth minister. I’ll be working with the young people in our church. I’ll also be working on programs to reach out to other young believers in the community to minister to them as well.”

There’s nothing notable about that conversation. Now, let’s make it offensive. Let’s replace one group with another. Consider this conversation:

“Hi, I’m Bob. I’m the new minister to the rich.”

“You’re the what?”

“The minister to the rich. I’ll be working with the rich people in our church. I’ll also be working on programs to reach out to other rich believers in the community to minister to them as well.”

This feels strange. It feels vaguely wrong. Isn’t this somehow profaning the church? Isn’t this mixing with worldliness, capitalism, or “filthy lucre”?

No. It's not. As we'll see, this isn't about giving a superior position to the rich. It's about delivering a specific message. It's about providing a specific ministry.

Ancient words are the latest thing

People love to hear what's new. When I speak for fundraising groups, I'll send a list of topics. Often, the organizers will ask, "Which one is your latest?" They want the new stuff.²

Of course, I'm happy to share the latest findings. In fact, I'll be doing that a lot in this book. But here's the truth. The most effective fundraising advice is not new.³ It was written down about two thousand years ago.⁴ This passage describes it.

Where does the money come from?

Consider some mathematical realities. Suppose you want your ministry or charity to have a big impact. What do you need? Many things! But money can help. And where do you get that? Probably from donations.

Statistically, the money won't come just from any donations. It will come from a specific type of donation. It will come from major donations. It will come from major donors.

A 2022 study of over 8,000 charities found that three-fourths of fundraising dollars came from the top 2.6% of donors.⁵ A 2024 study looked at multi-year capital campaigns from over 500 nonprofits. On average, the 20 largest gifts met 70% of total campaign goals.⁶ Another study found,

"Currently, many of the large not-for-profit campaigns are experiencing closer to a 95/5 ratio."⁷

This means the top 5% of donors provide 95% of the money. That's extreme! This is not an 80/20 or "Pareto principle" world. This is more like an 80/2 world. The top 2% of donors will commonly give 80% of the dollars. But the full picture is even more extreme.

For example, these studies don't include gifts to charitable trusts. They don't include gifts to private family foundations. Wealthy donors often give using these structures. In these entities, the largest 1% receives about half of the money.⁸ In estate gifts, the results are yet more extreme. The wealthiest 0.1% of decedents give most of the charitable estate dollars.⁹

Depending on how we measure it, the real charitable dollars will come from the top 2%, 1%, or even 0.1% of donors.¹⁰ That's reality.

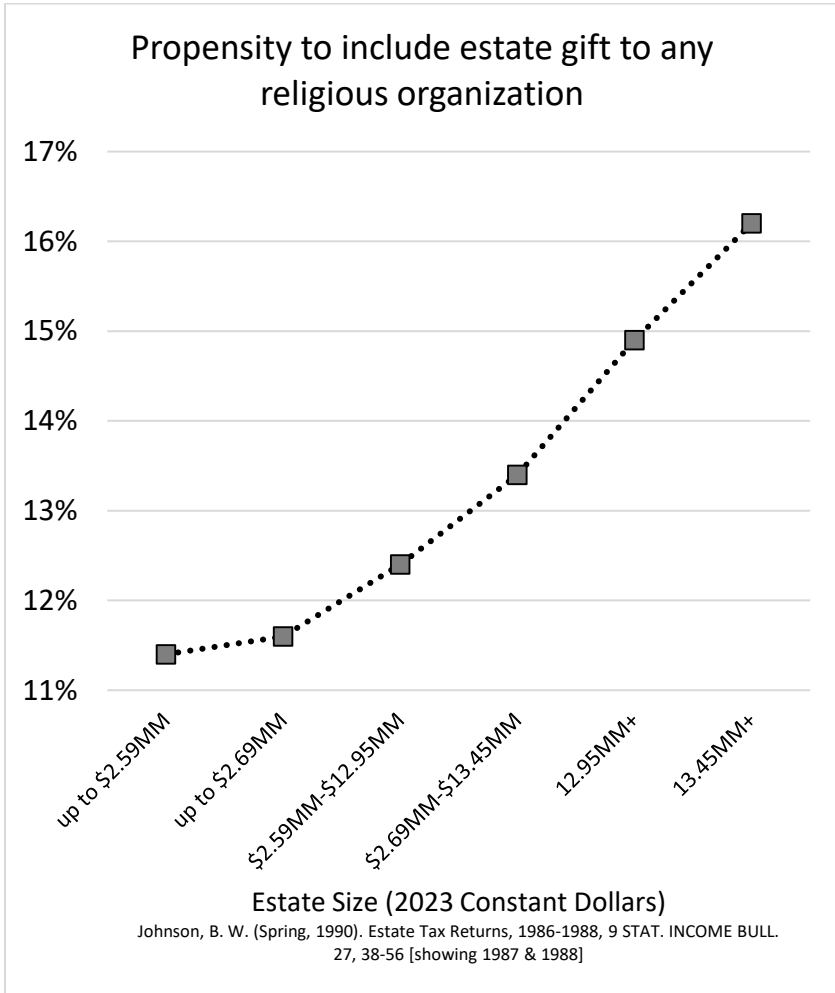
None of these discounts the spiritual importance for all donors, even poor widows, to give. But it does reveal a statistical truth. Donations can provide the resources we need to fully fund our mission. But this won't come from "normal" donors. It will come from a small handful of donors. It will come from those with the capacity to make a transformational impact. It will come from the rich.

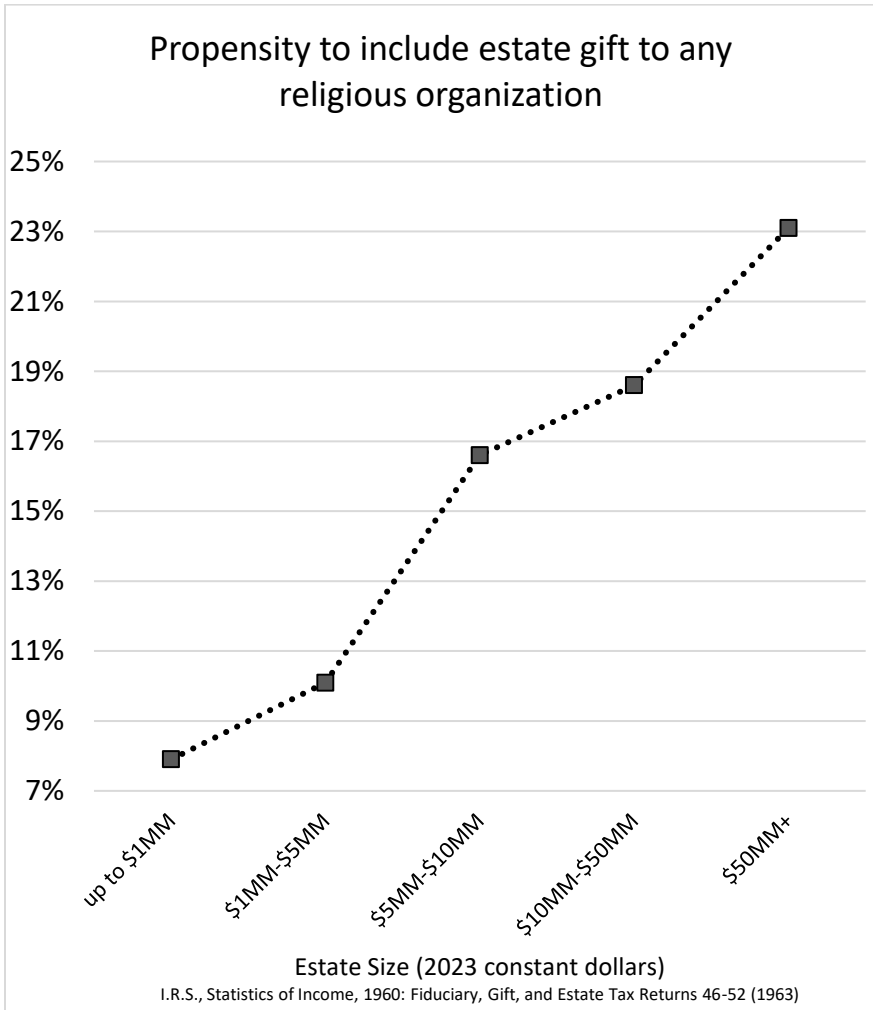
This may be uncomfortable. It may be offensive. But it's still true. This ministry to the rich is important. It was 2,000 years ago. It still is today.

The missing ministry in the data

Of course, you don't have to minister to the wealthy. You don't have to guide their use of wealth. Others are already doing that. But they won't be encouraging generosity – at least not towards your ministry or nonprofit.

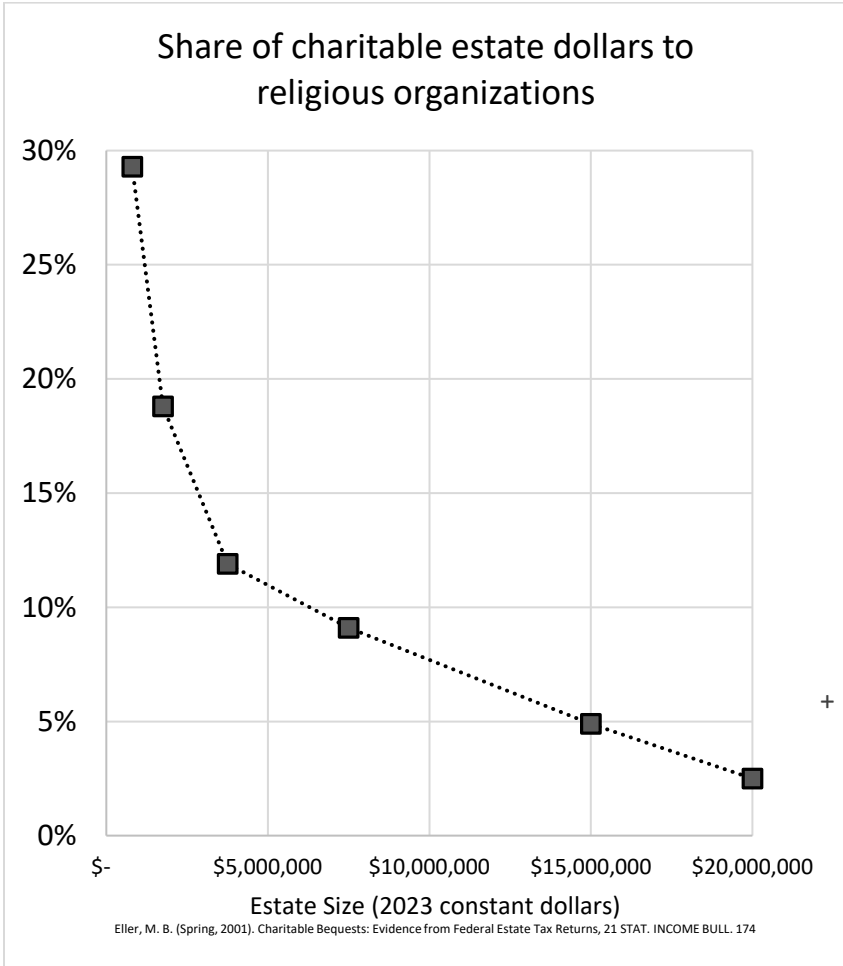
Despite Paul's direction, the ministry to the wealthy is missing from the church. And the church is missing out on these gifts. Evidence of this missing ministry appears in the giving data. Consider national data from charitable estate gifts. First, the good news. As wealth increases, the likelihood of giving to religious organizations also increases. The below charts from different years of IRS data show this.





The likelihood of giving to religious organizations increases with wealth.¹¹ But here’s the problem. These gifts never get big.

As wealth increases, the large gifts don’t go to religious organizations. They go to universities. They go to healthcare organizations.¹² As wealth increases further, they go to private family foundations. Gifts to religion stay small. Again, national data from the IRS shows this:



The share of people giving to religion increases with wealth. But the share of charitable dollars going to religion plummets. The number of charitable donors to religion goes up. The share of charitable dollars to religion goes down.

Religious organizations do receive estate gifts from the wealthy. They receive small, pat-on-the-head gifts. Yes, they are included. But the significant philanthropy goes elsewhere.

Religious organizations are good at getting small gifts. They are bad at getting large ones. The major gifts to religion are missing. These missing gifts match the missing ministry of major gift fundraising.

We see this same missing segment in current donations. A 2022 study looked at giving to all kinds of US charities. It included all gifts to 8,816 charities (from 7.4 million donors). About half of all charitable dollars came from the top 0.3% of donors.¹³ This is what charitable giving normally looks like. This is the typical charitable organization.

However, this typical funding from top donors is missing in the American church. Another 2022 study looked at giving to US churches. In the typical charity, the top 0.3% of donors provides half of the money. But in churches, that top 0.3% of donors provides only 14.4% of the money. Even the top 1% of church donors provides only 19.6% of gift income.¹⁴ Again, the story is the same. Churches were good at getting small gifts. They were bad at getting large ones. The major gifts to religion were missing.¹⁵

It's not that wealthy people aren't Christians. In fact, the majority of millionaires in the world are Christian.¹⁶ It's not that they don't attend church. More frequent church attendance actually predicts higher income.¹⁷ It's not that wealthy Christians don't make large gifts. They just don't make them to the church. They don't make them to religious organizations.

These large gifts are missing. Also missing: Paul's ministry to the rich – the ministry of major gift fundraising.

PART II

POWERFUL FUNDRAISING PRACTICES

Focusing on the high-capacity donor

So, let's get practical. Suppose we want to raise more money. What works? One approach usually wins. It always starts the same way. It starts by spending more time with high-capacity prospects. One study analyzed hundreds of fundraising campaigns. What worked? It found that

“In the vast majority of cases, portfolio optimization provides the biggest delta in rapid production increases ... It is a simple question of, ‘Are we seeing the best prospects?’ So much energy goes into the ‘seeing,’ but the ‘best prospects’ portion of the question continues to be our main missed opportunity pain point.”¹⁸

Another author put it this way,

“Many would gladly trade cold million-dollar prospects for warm ten-thousand-dollar prospects. Unfortunately, many do make this swap – a recipe for failure.”¹⁹

The math is undeniable. Suppose you spend the next two years working with 100 donors. Each has the capacity to make a \$10,000 gift. Each has a 75% chance of making that gift. This results in \$750,000 of gifts.

Now suppose instead you work with 100 donors, each with the capacity to make a \$1 million gift. But each has only a 3% chance of making that gift. This results in \$3,000,000 of gifts. These donors were 25X less interested in giving. But the results are still 4X better.

That's the math. But here's the reality. No one wants to get turned down 97% of the time. That feels like failure. It's disheartening. It's emotionally unsustainable.

Unless. Unless we think differently. Things change if we're in ministry, not sales. We're delivering a scriptural message about generosity. We're delivering it to a specific group. Doing this is important. It's commanded.

No, the response won't always be "Yes." We can't control that. But that doesn't change our responsibility to deliver the message. We're carrying out a ministry. It's a scriptural ministry to this specific group.

Getting a big gift is great. And that should happen. But our job is not to "always be closing." Our work is not just sales. Our work is to deliver this specific message. Our work is to minister to this specific group.

Donor capacity vs. donor commitment

In fundraising, donor capacity is important. It's hard to argue against that. But capacity isn't everything. We want donors with high capacity and high interest. But these factors are not equally important. That's not how the math works. That's also not how people work.

We can do a lot to increase a donor's interest. Creating donor experiences helps. Building relationships with employees, beneficiaries, or other donors helps. Making connections with the donor's values, people, and life story helps. Any of these can increase interest.

And what can we do to increase a donor's capacity? Nothing. If we start with high-capacity, low-interest prospects,

we can grow their interest. But if we start with low-capacity, high-interest prospects, we can't grow their capacity.

Capacity + beliefs: It's not for all rich people

This passage describes a ministry to the rich. But wealth isn't the only factor. 1 Timothy is about managing the church household. It describes ministries to those within the church.

1 Timothy also describes a ministry to older widows. But this was not for every older widow in Ephesus. It was only for those in the church. The same was true for the ministries to younger widows, younger men, younger women, older men, or older women. Paul was not describing ministries to the entire pagan world. These were only for those within the church. These were ministries only to believers.

So, yes, this ministry is to the rich. But it is only to rich people who are part of the church. It is only for believers.

Again, the passage matches modern fundraising practice. Financial capacity is great. But spending time with wealthy people who will never care about your cause won't work. Of course, they don't have to start with a passion for your specific organization. That can develop over time. But if their underlying values and beliefs don't align, it's a dead end. Fundraising can't fix that.

This passage matches that reality. The wealthy donor might not start with a passion for your cause. But their underlying values and beliefs must align.

Effective ministry practice: Seeking out your people group

Suppose we accept a call to minister to a specific people

group. Great! Now what? Well, at some point, we'll probably have to find them. Do we want to minister to prisoners? We'll probably have to visit a prison. Do we want to minister to people overseas? We'll probably need to go there.

Some groups aren't as easy to find. Suppose we want to minister to ex-convicts. How might we find them? Public records could be a great starting place. Word-of-mouth referrals might help. Offering relevant classes or services could work.

Regardless of the group, the concept is the same. We must find our people group in order to minister to them. We have to seek them out.

This is also true when ministering to the rich. We have to seek them out, too. Having an authorized message for them is great. But we still have to find them first.

Effective fundraising practice: Capacity analytics

What the Bible says is true. It works. The largest, most effective, modern fundraising charities use the same approach. They dedicate extensive resources to identifying the wealthy among their friends and supporters. Many books and consultants focus on this single task.²⁰ There's even an industry association for it.²¹ Why? Because it works.

The latest trends all point to the same thing. Successful fundraising charities focus on identifying and connecting with their high-capacity donors. Yet, the latest thing isn't new. It's thousands of years old. Yes, this is a ministry to encourage generosity. But it's a specialized ministry. It's for "those who are rich in this present world."

Doing this is hard work. For a fundraiser, it's more fun to work with highly committed, lower-capacity donors. That's more enjoyable. But that's not this ministry. That's not this people group.²²

Now that we know the people group, what's next? How should we approach them? The next word in the passage gives the answer.

¹ For example, Professor Arland Hultgren labels his commentary on this passage with the title “Ministry to the Wealthy.” Hultgren, A. J. (1984). *Augsburg commentary on the New Testament: I-II Timothy, Titus, II Thessalonians*. Augsburg Publishing House. p. 101.

² Or at least they think they do. In truth, it takes some practice to learn what connects and what doesn’t. These presentations improve over time. So, it is actually the older, more refined presentations that tend to work the best!

³ As Henry David Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, “What news! How much more important to know what that is which was never old!” [Thoreau, H. D. (1854). *Walden, or life in the woods*. The Internet Bookmobile. p. 71. <https://azeitao.files.wordpress.com/2007/05/walden.pdf>]

⁴ In fact, Paul may have been modifying and Christianizing a well-known argument to encourage generosity among the wealthy given by the Greek poet Menander in the play *Dyskolos* from 317 B.C. (located at 797-817). Paul also quotes Menander in 1 Corinthians 15:33. Thus, parts of the advice may have been written down over 2,300 years ago! See “A literary allusion: How Menander’s *Dyskolos* adds meaning,” Chapter 13-III in *The Biblical fundraiser in ancient words: The historical ministry of major gifts fundraising*.

⁵ In 2022, donors making gifts of \$50,000+ represented 0.3% of donors and 48.3% of dollars. Those making gifts of \$5,000-\$50,000 represented an additional 2.3% of donors and an additional 26.0% of dollars. [The Fundraising Effectiveness Project. *Quarterly Fundraising Report™ Year-to-Date Nonprofit Sector Trends Q4 2022 (JAN 1, 2022 - DEC 31, 2022)*, <https://data.givingtuesday.org/fep-report/>]; An older analysis found that the top 13% of donors gave 88% of the money. [Miller, B. (2016, Winter). The Pareto Principle – How does it apply to fundraising? *Advancing Philanthropy*. <https://afpglobal.org/news/donors-pareto-principle-how-does-it-apply-fundraising/>]

⁶ This study also included comprehensive campaigns, i.e., those encompassing both capital projects and annual gifts as part of the campaign goals. Shattuck, S., Eisenstein, A., & Plimpton, S. (2024). *The state of capital campaigns 2024*. CapitalCampaignPro. p. 14.

⁷ Donor Point. (2018, November 14). *Wealth distribution in the U.S. is changing charitable giving*. <https://www.donorpoint.com/wealth-distribution-in-the-u-s-is-changing-charitable-giving/>

⁸ Estimate from numbers provided in Internal Revenue Service – Statistics of Income Division. (2013, August). Table 7. *Charitable remainder unitrusts: End-of-year fair market value asset information, by size of end-of-year book value of total assets, filing year 2012*. <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/12eo07sit.xls> and Internal Revenue Service – Statistics of Income Division. (2022, February). Table 3. *Domestic private foundations: Income statements and balance sheets, by size of fair market value of total assets, tax year 2018*. <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/18pf03ta.xls>

⁹ “[In] 2017, when only 2,902 estates with charitable transfers filed estate tax returns, these estates still produced the majority (59%) of all bequest dollars transferred to charity in the country.” [James, R. N., III. (2020). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning & Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285. p. 250.] Also see, a total of 2,813,503 decedents in 2017 at National Center for Health Statistics. (2018, November). Mortality in the United States, 2017. *NCHS*

Data Brief, 328. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db328-h.pdf>

¹⁰ For example, at colleges and universities, the single largest donation will typically constitute about 10% of all gift income in any year. [Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A. & King, J. (2022, June 14). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. <https://www.case.org/resources/case-study-principal-gifts-us-colleges-universities>]

¹¹ This is consistent across many decades of IRS data beyond the example charts provided here. For a full summary of these findings see James III, R. N. (2019). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning & Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285.

¹² James III, R. N. (2019). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning & Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285.

¹³ In 2022, donors making gifts of \$50,000+ represented 0.3% of donors and 48.3% of dollars. Those making gifts of \$5,000-\$50,000 represented an additional 2.3% of donors and an additional 26.0% of dollars. [The Fundraising Effectiveness Project. *Quarterly Fundraising Report™ Year-to-Date Nonprofit Sector Trends Q4 2022 (JAN 1, 2022 - DEC 31, 2022)*, <https://data.givingtuesday.org/fep-report/>]

¹⁴ Similarly, the top 2.6% of donors in the typical charity provides three-quarters of the money. In churches, these top 2.6% of donors provide about one-third (34.5%) of charitable dollars. [Data from 675 churches provided by MortarStone LLC. <https://mortarstone.com/>]

¹⁵ This may be more than just a recent phenomenon. In 1887 Alfred Rowland noted: “Men give their tens of thousands for a park or for a library, for a home for the insane, or for a noble educational institution – and so far they do well; but we have seldom heard of such a great gift on behalf of direct Christian work.” [Rowland, A. (1887). *Paul’s First letter to Timothy*. James Nesbit & Co. p. 282]

¹⁶ 56.2% of the 13.1 million millionaires in the world were Christians. [Frank, R. (Jan. 14, 2015). *The religion of millionaires*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2015/01/14/the-religion-of-millionaires-.html>]

¹⁷ “Putting this together with the census results, it implies that doubling the frequency of attendance leads to a 9.1% increase in household income” [Gruber, J. (2005). Religious market structure, religious participation, and outcomes: Is religion good for you? *NBER Working Paper Series*, 11377. p. 18]; See also, “a household with double the rate of religious attendance as another household has 9.1 percent more income” [Francis, D. R. (Nov. 14, 2005). *It’s true: Churchgoers are wealthier*. The Christian Science Monitor. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/1114/p15s02-cogn.html>]

¹⁸ BWF Research. (2016, June 23). *How to survive drowning in an unwieldy portfolio hoard*. [Website]. BWF. <https://www.bwf.com/data-science/survive-drowning-unwieldy-portfolio-hoard/>

¹⁹ Daniel, J. P. (2009, January 26). *Cold calls, the first hurdle*. [Website]. BWF. <https://www.bwf.com/published-by-bwf/cold-calls-the-first-hurdle/>

²⁰ See, e.g., Birkholz, J. M. (2020). *Fundraising analytics: Using data to guide strategy*. John Wiley & Sons; Filla, J. J., & Brown, H. E. (2013). *Prospect research for fundraisers: The essential handbook*. John Wiley & Sons; Hancks, M., & Rosson, C. (2013). *Prospect research is a verb: Fundraising is the subject*. CharityChannel Press.

²¹ The Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement at <https://www.aprahome.org/>

²² Generosity is by no means limited to the rich, even though this specific ministry in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 focuses on this specific people group. In 1921, minister and writer V. L. Stump, explained, “To the working man the Word of God speaks, bidding him to: ‘Labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.’—Ephesians 4:28. To the wealthy the Spiritual injunction is: ‘Charge them that are rich ... that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come.’ I Tim. 6:17. These two verses enjoin both classes to lay aside the thought of self-aggrandizement for a life devotion to the enrichment of others.” [Stump, V. L. (1921, April 11). *The Evangelical Visitor*, 34 (632), p. 16. <https://mosaic.messiah.edu/evanvisitor/781>

Chapter 2

The ministry relationship: Right and wrong roles in modern fundraising

- *Biblical fundraising comes alongside [para] the wealthy to deliver an authorized message [angelle] about generosity.*
- *Ordinary fundraising begs from below, attacks from above, or avoids the wealthy.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "**Instruct** those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life"

PART I

THE RIGHT ROLE: *PARANGELLE* IN PRACTICE

One word can change things

This passage describes the ministry relationship with one word – *parangelle*. This is *para* + *angelle*. *Para* means to come “alongside” or “close-beside.” *Angelle* (from *angelos* – angel or herald) is one who delivers an authorized message.

The fundraiser comes alongside to deliver an authorized message. The verb tense calls for continuous, ongoing, nonstop message delivery. This word means to instruct, teach, tell, recommend, or counsel. (The military translation, “command,” likely doesn’t fit your ministry relationship with the person.)¹

So, let's get practical. We have a job to do. We have money to raise. How can one word help?

Go to any fundraising conference, and you'll get lots of advice. Mostly, the advice is about tactics. Try this. Don't do that. Here are 10 tips and tricks. That's all fine. These can be helpful. But something is missing.

Beyond the tips and tricks is something deeper. Effective fundraising is not just about what we are doing. It's also about who we are being. It's about the role we're filling.

This one word, *parangelle*, can change things. Filling this scriptural role changes things. It makes us different. We aren't just being fundraisers. We're being something more. We're providing

- A continuing ministry to the rich
- That comes alongside to deliver an authorized message
- About enjoying wealth through impactful sharing

The fundraiser's role matters

Start with the wrong role, and a list of tips and tricks won't fix it. Start with the right role, and the methods will follow naturally. Top fundraisers recognize this. One book describes it this way:

“The secret to rapid and astonishing success in fundraising seems to require a shift. Not a shift in what you are doing (although that will happen) but more of a shift in who you are being.”²

Fundraising researchers see this, too. Dr. Beth Breeze explains that effective fundraising,

“goes beyond the mechanical aspects”

because it requires

“making existential changes.”³

A clever fundraising tactic is fine. But effective fundraising doesn't start there. It starts with who we are trying to be. It starts with the role we are filling.

The fundraiser's role is practical: Persistence

There are many modern advice books for fundraisers. Read them, and you'll notice common themes. You'll read advice like

“Persistence is the name of the game.”⁴

“In other words, persistence can pay.”⁵

“Polite persistence pays!”⁶

“Persist and you'll see the payoff.”⁷

“Your persistence will make you successful.”⁸

“Persistence is key.”⁹

“Be persistent.”¹⁰

You'll read whole sections like

“BE persistent”¹¹

“Persistence and Patience”

“Persistence”¹²

“And now a final word – persistence”¹³

You'll learn things about the job, like

“Fundraising ... is professional work that requires time, dedication, persistence, and expertise.”¹⁴

“What does it take to be a good fundraiser? Strengths like persuasion, problem-solving and persistence come quickly to mind.”¹⁵

You'll learn how the largest gifts occur. You'll read advice like,

“How many churches and hospital wings have been built because of the grit and persistence of a single-minded campaign chair?”¹⁶

“the largest campaign gifts ... require flexibility, patience, and persistence.”¹⁷

For some fundraising advice books, persistence isn't just an idea. It's the main point. One author explains,

“I wrote [this book] to encourage you to go about your business with determination, persistence, and pride.”¹⁸

We can read dozens of modern books on fundraising. Or we can read 1 Timothy 6:17-19. *Parangelle*, instruct, is a present imperative. Experts explain,

“present imperatives give a command to do something constantly.”¹⁹

“The present imperatives characterize the activity under consideration as one which is to be repeated time and time again, a continual process, iterative by nature.”²⁰

In other words,

“Timothy was not merely to ‘tell them’ and the matter would be ended. He had to keep on telling them.”²¹

The fundraiser's role is practical: Confidence

Another common theme in modern fundraising books is fundraiser confidence. Fundraising is scary! Advice books try to help fundraisers overcome this fear. One author explains,

“The goal of this book is to give you the confidence you need to ask people for money—to turn you into a fearless fundraiser”²²

Another describes the goal of her book this way,

“It is my hope, my dream, and my desire that after you read this book ... you will experience a sense of self-confidence.”²³

We can read fundraising advice books. Or we can read one word. Fundraiser confidence is embedded in our word. The fundraiser comes alongside [*para*] with an authorized message [*angelle*]. The fundraiser is, literally, an angel (*angelos*: messenger) who comes alongside the wealth holder. You'll never see a timid, fearful, or hesitant angel in the Bible!

Confidence comes naturally when you're delivering an authorized message from a high authority. Confidence comes naturally when you're an authorized messenger. Confidence comes naturally when your role is to *parangelle*.

The fundraiser's role is tactical: Where should I sit?

Once we know the role, the actions will follow. Consider this hyper-specific question. Suppose you're meeting with the donor. Where should you sit? Where should you stand?

The answer starts with your role. Who are you being? Scripture says you're the authorized messenger who comes alongside. How can you fill this role? You come alongside.

Maybe you can physically walk alongside a donor. You could point to where a project might take place. The focus object might be a field, a room, or a building.

Sitting directly across a table doesn't match the role. That's a conflict or negotiation position. It's not "coming alongside" the donor.

Sitting at an angle works better. Or you can use a focus object like a proposal document. This creates a more merging position. You're both above the document, creating a vertical triangle. This is closer to "coming alongside."

How should you use this document? You turn the pages. You mark on the proposal, circling, and underlining. Why? Because you are the authorized messenger. You take the physical posture of advising, explaining, and guiding.

You don't just hand the document to the donor. If you do, he might just interact with the document and exclude you. You'll no longer be the one delivering the message. You'll lose the physical position of "coming alongside." Your *parangelle* position will start to degrade.

These are hyper-specific details. They're the smallest of the do's and don'ts. And yet, we already know the right answers. Why? Is it because we've memorized a list of tips and tricks? No. It's because we know the right role.

Filling the right role leads to the right actions, both big and small. Filling the wrong role doesn't. The problem isn't a lack of tips and tricks. The problem is more fundamental. The problem is this: Many fundraisers are playing the wrong role.

Why the “fundraiser” title doesn’t help

This book is called *The Biblical Fundraiser*. But “fundraiser” is not a Biblical term. In fact, it didn’t appear in the English language until just before the 20th century.²⁴

Fundraiser is also not a helpful term. It says nothing about the work itself. “Fund” means money. “Raiser” is one who gets the money. So, a “fund-raiser” is a “money-getter.” But so is a drug dealer. So is a prostitute or a thief. They’re all “money-getters.” This says nothing about the work itself.

The fundraiser’s money goes to a good cause. But a drug dealer could use their money this way, too. A thief could do the same. This changes nothing about the nature of their actual work.

Any work can result in “money-getting.” But the “money-getting” doesn’t define the work. It doesn’t describe the job. This is also true for the fundraiser.

Effective fundraising can result in bringing in money. But that doesn’t define the work of this ministry. Instead, Scripture defines the work. What is the work of the fundraiser? In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, it is

- A continuing ministry to the rich
- That comes alongside to deliver an authorized message
- About enjoying wealth through impactful sharing

This job description separates the work from other types of fundraising. This work is not about small, disposable income gifts. It’s about wealth and wealth sharing. This work is not about begging. It’s about coming alongside to advise. This work is not about taking from donors. It’s about providing enjoyment and real value.

What's the right job title for this role?

Fundraiser is not a good description. It's not a good job title. In fact, most fundraisers avoid the word. One study found that fundraisers,

“discussed avoiding using the term fundraiser in their interpersonal interactions ... managing potential stigmas associated with their profession.”²⁵

Like other stigmatized jobs, fundraiser titles often use ambiguous words. They use words like “development” or “institutional advancement.”²⁶ For outsiders, this obscures the job. Normal people don't use these words in this way. For insiders, this portrays the job as advancing institutional goals. The job is to help the institution, not the donor.

So, what is a good “fundraiser” job title from the donor's perspective? In one study, I tested 71 different fundraiser job titles with over 3,000 respondents.²⁷ I measured people's willingness to contact the charity employee about making,

- A gift of real estate
- A gift of stock
- A gift in a will, or
- A complex planned gift

The worst performing job titles? They used the typical words like “advancement” or “development.”

The best job titles were different. The top ten all included some variation of “advising,” “guiding,” or “planning.” These titles showed that the person was there to help the donors.

It's nice to publish new results like these. But this result wasn't actually new. It was old. How does Paul describe his fundraising message to the donors? He writes,

“I advise you this to help you” (2 Corinthians 8:10b).²⁸

Paul's ancient description matches the best-performing job titles. He includes this in his fundraising appeal letter. (2 Corinthians 8 & 9). But he doesn't just send a letter. He also sends a fundraiser. He sends Titus. He lets them know, explicitly, that Titus is going there as a fundraiser. Paul writes,

“So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving.” (2 Corinthians 8:6 NLT).

What should we call Titus the fundraiser? How can we introduce him at a party? Paul answers this, too. He writes,

“If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner [*koinōnos*] who works with [*syn-ergos*] me to help you.” (2 Corinthians 8:23a NLT)²⁹

Titus is going there to fundraise. Paul is explicit about this. How do we introduce him? We say that he is there to help the donors. Paul's ancient job description matches the best-performing job titles.

Paul's description offers something else, too. Through Titus, the donors have direct, personal access to the ministry leadership. Titus is Paul's closely connected partner [*koinōnos*]. He is Paul's fellow-worker [*syn-ergos*].

Describing the role: So, what do you do?

Let's get practical. Paul explains what to say if someone “asks about” Titus, the fundraiser. What if someone “asks

about” you? How can we use Paul’s description in a normal conversation?

Suppose someone asks, “So, what do you do?” A standard response might be:

“I’m a fundraiser. I ask people for money.”

One author describes the reaction to this. He writes,

“When responding to the question ‘So what do you do?’ with ‘I’m a fundraiser. I ask people for money.’ There’s silence, then confusion, then ‘I could never do that,’ or ‘Do you get paid to do that?’ No one says: ‘That must be interesting,’ or, ‘I’ll bet you get to meet lots of fascinating people.’”³⁰

That description doesn’t work. Scripture provides a better alternative. Paul’s description sounds more like this:

“I work for [organization]. I work closely with our president to help our donors.”³¹

This communicates the role. You work closely with the leadership to help donors. But this can do something else. It can start a conversation. It can start an opportunity for ministry. A likely response will be:

“How do you do that?”

That response provides an opportunity. It gives you permission to discuss your ministry. You might say,

“I help our donors plan their gifts to make the impact that’s most meaningful for them. We work through what they care about. We discuss what has been important in their lives. Then we connect that with possible projects that reflect their values and match their life story. This helps them enjoy their wealth in a more meaningful way.

It's honestly more enjoyable than just consuming more stuff."

"So, what about you? Are there any causes that have been important in your life?³² ... What was it that connected you to that cause?"

This response describes the work. Then it starts the work. It starts the donor advising process [*parangelle*].

Another response is to share a donor story. (That's how Paul started his giving appeal in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.) You can share a story about how you've helped another donor

"to do good and be rich in good works" (1 Timothy 6:18a).

Your story might sound like this:

"I helped one woman who is about your age. You actually remind me of her. Maybe because you both work in finance."

[Identification with the story character: This is someone like you.]

"In talking with her, I learned about her life story. She had first learned about Jesus through a bus ministry. It came to her neighborhood when she was a child. She went just to be with her friends, but the teaching changed her life."

[Backstory: Life story motivates the action.]

"So, I worked with our leadership. We put together a plan covering all the costs of starting a bus ministry. This even endowed part of a minister's position to run the program."

[The call to adventure: I work closely with leadership to create personally crafted opportunities for donors to do good works.]

“She loved the idea, but the \$500,000 total cost was too much. So, I suggested that she fund it over time. A \$50,000-75,000 annual commitment would allow the plan to move forward. She decided to make it happen! After her second gift, we were able to start running.”
[Obstacles and victory: I help donors to overcome barriers to do good works.]

“I love to see how she connects with these young people now. Their lives have been changed because of her giving. And they have a special place in her heart because of her own journey.”
[Resolution: Donors become rich in beautiful, good works.]

The example tells a story. It includes a backstory, goal, conflict, victory, and resolution. In it, the fundraiser comes alongside to help the donor. The fundraiser helps the donor

“to do good and be rich in good works” (1 Timothy 6:18a).

Again, the example can end with a question:

“So, tell me about your faith journey. Are there any ministries that have been important in your life?”

The fundraiser doesn't just describe his job. He starts doing it. He begins actively ministering to the other person. He begins the process of encouraging generosity.

He starts helping to connect them with personally meaningful giving opportunities. He comes alongside to instruct. He doesn't just describe *parangelle*. He actually starts doing it.

Shifting the fundraiser's role: Shock tactics

Playing a different role creates a different result. The role of the helpful advisor with an authorized message works. It produces larger gifts. It provides real value by showing how to enjoy wealth through impactful giving. This works better than begging. Begging produces small gifts. It's also specifically excluded by the term *parangelle*!

The first step is to fill the right role. We can change this role in our own minds. But how can we change this role in the donor's mind? How can we change the perception that our job is to just ask for money? One way is extreme but also effective. It shatters the "high-pressure sales" or "begging" stereotypes.

In sales research, this strategy is called advising against self-interest. It breaks the stereotype by acting in an opposite way. For example,

“referring that customer to a competitor when their product is a better fit often builds long-term trust, because it's clear you're an honest broker.”³³

Academic researchers explain the strategy this way:

“By acting contrary to the occupational stereotype, the manager hoped to be seen as the exception, thereby gaining the trust of potential clients and possibly even changing their perceptions of the occupation as a whole.”³⁴

Acting contrary to expectations can also apply in fundraising. The fundraiser might advise the donor to give less. Or to give later. Or to include another organization. Or to add instructions with their gift. In each case, the advice breaks the stereotype. The fundraiser is not here just to ask, ask, and ask. The fundraiser is here to help the donor make a specific impact.

If you've donated, you've probably gotten a gift acknowledgment letter. Often these also include an ask. Or at least they'll offer an opportunity for the next gift. What if you got one that said the opposite? What if it said,

“Your gift worked! Thanks so much. Everything is great now. No need for any more giving. What you sent was plenty.”

I'm guessing you've never received that kind of donation acknowledgment letter. That's just not how fundraising works. Except in the Bible.

In Philippians 4, Paul includes a “gift acknowledgment” letter. He thanks the donors to his ministry. But then he does something shocking for modern fundraising. He writes,

“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent” (Philippians 4:18a).

We've seen this before. In Exodus 35, Moses was running a “capital campaign” for the construction of the Tabernacle. And then Moses did something strange. He gave a new command:

“Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: ‘No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.’ And so the people were restrained from bringing more” (Exodus 36:6 NIV).

In both cases, the message was the same. Your gift worked! It accomplished the task. It was plenty. That's enough. Stop giving.

That message is rare in modern fundraising. But it's actually quite powerful. It's powerful because it breaks the

traditional role. The fundraiser is not there to just ask, ask, and ask. The fundraiser is there to help the donor make a specific impact.

When a fundraiser advises the donor that they've given enough, it changes the relationship. (So does advising them to give less, or later, or with more instructions.) This isn't what a salesperson does – and that's the point. This isn't what a beggar does – and that's the point. It breaks the stereotype. It changes the role. It changes the relationship.

The right role matters

In the rest of this book, we'll look at powerful fundraising messages. We'll look at ancient words and modern applications. But 1 Timothy 6:17-19 doesn't start with the persuasive messages. It starts with the first things first. It starts with the people and the relationship.

This is a ministry to a special group. It's *Tois plousiois*. It's to the rich Christians. It's to the wealth holders.

This is a special relationship. It's a relationship of *parangelle*. It's an ongoing ministry relationship. It's coming alongside to deliver an authorized message. That message is compelling. It offers the best deal ever. But the power of the message starts with the right relationship. It starts with the right role.

Six wrong roles

This passage describes a fundraiser's role. It defines the work. It defines the job. Of course, it is possible to fundraise in very different ways. It's possible to play very different roles.

Many fundraising approaches differ from this Biblical description. Understanding these competing roles helps. The contrast can clarify. It can show how Biblical fundraising is special.

Some of the roles are bad. They're bad for the donor. They're bad for the fundraiser. And, in the long term, they're bad for the charity.

Some roles aren't bad. They're just different. They're not this ministry. They don't fulfill this passage.

These roles provide a contrast. They can also be a warning. If you're playing one of these roles, be careful! You may be ignoring the scriptural ministry of major gift fundraising. You might even be contradicting it.

This cast of wrong roles includes

- The apologetic panhandler
- The always-be-closing sales machine
- The sideline gawker
- The friend-raising socialite
- The class-conflict crusader
- The teeth-gritting martyr

Next, we'll look at each character's role. We'll see how each differs from the Biblical fundraiser role. And we'll see how the real-world results differ too.

PART II

WRONG ROLES: THE APOLOGETIC PANHANDLER ☹

Contrasting roles

In fundraising, the apologetic panhandler might sound like this:

“I’m so sorry to bother you, but if it wouldn’t be too much trouble, please give. Anything would help.”

This role conflicts with our passage in several ways. First, it reflects the wrong message authority. It’s not *parangelle*. An authorized message is not delivered with uncertainty. A royal proclamation comes with no apology.

We have an authorized message. It’s an inspired message. Even more, it’s an attractive message. It brings “treasure.” It delivers “that which is truly life.” Should we feel hesitant about sharing such a message? Of course not!

This conflicting role also has the wrong relationship. Begging asks for alms from below. (The relationship is vertical.) The gift goes to an outsider. (The donor is disconnected.)

The scriptural ministry is the opposite. It comes alongside the donor. (The relationship is horizontal.) The gift benefits the shared fellowship. (It pulls the donor into the community.)

This conflicting role also reflects the wrong message content. It implies that the donor will be made worse off. A

beggar takes from the donor. This makes the asking apologetic.

The scriptural ministry is the opposite. It delivers amazing benefits to the donor. It shows the donor how to enjoy his wealth. It makes him rich in beautiful good works. It deeply connects him to a mutually reciprocal fellowship community. It helps him take hold of that which is truly life.

These are marvelous results. They're better than just piling up more stuff. They're more fun than cramming in more consumption. What this ministry offers is attractive. It's desirable. It's a good deal for the donor!

The conflicting role also focuses on the wrong gift size. Begging asks small. It's about pocket change. It's about disposable income. It's a message of need and scarcity.

The scriptural ministry is the opposite. It's all about abundance. It's about sharing wealth. It's about sharing generously. It's about creating big, beautiful, noble good works.

These two roles conflict. Embracing the Biblical ministry means rejecting the apologetic panhandler role.

Problems for fundraisers

Begging pairs with almsgiving. Almsgiving can be dangerous. It gives, but it can also take. It can reinforce – even publicize – the recipient's low status. It can puff up the donor by pushing down the recipient. It can separate and divide.

Begging pushes the recipient into a low status. It can also do this to the fundraiser. It can puff up the donor by pushing down the fundraiser. This is bad for fundraisers. It can be worse for minority fundraisers. A bad history makes this even more damaging.

The ministry of major gift fundraising is the opposite. Here, the fundraiser is beside – not below – the donor. The fundraiser delivers an attractive, authorized message. He does not beg for alms. He encourages creating noble, beautiful, good works. He urges generously sharing wealth with the fellowship community.

This type of giving is different from almsgiving. Almsgiving is important, but it's dangerous. It must be handled carefully. It should be done in secret. The donor should even keep it secret from himself! Jesus explains,

“But when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynēn*], do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”
(Matthew 6:3).

Sharing with the fellowship community [*koinōnikous*] is different. It's also important, but it's not dangerous. The donor and recipient are in a mutual, horizontal, sharing relationship. (2 Corinthians 8:14). They're in community.

Hence, this kind of giving need not be secret. It can be done openly. Paul says to do exactly that. (2 Corinthians 8:24). He publicizes groups of donors. (2 Corinthians 8:1-4). He publicizes individual named donors.³⁵ (Romans 16:1-2). U

This kind of giving is different. This kind of fundraising is different. The point is this. If it feels like begging, you're doing it wrong!

Problems for charities

Begging can be bad for the recipient. It can be bad for the fundraiser. It can also be bad for the charity.

Begging asks to take something from the donor. This leads to asking apologetically. It leads to asking small. Begging presents giving as unpleasant.

If it's painful, why do it? Often, the justification is extreme need. But extreme need emphasizes small gifts. It means that small amounts do a lot. The message is, "Anything will help."³⁶

Here's the real danger: This message works.³⁷ It works, but it's a trap. It works to get a gift, but only a small one. It won't get a large gift.³⁸ It can get pocket change from disposable income. It won't get a share of wealth.

This desperate plea from scarcity feels like it's effective. But it closes the door to major fundraising success. The results might initially seem attractive. But they won't get the charity where it wants to go.

Biblical fundraising is the opposite. Giving doesn't take something from the donor. It provides enormous value to the donor. It's a fantastic deal for the donor. The donor experience is worth the gift. This is a message of abundance and victory. It says,

"You have wealth. Why not learn how to enjoy it? Why not also be rich in good works? Why not store up even more treasure in another way? Why not experience that which is truly life?"

How much more enjoyable it is to deliver this message of abundance! Fundraising this way is more fun! And it works better, too. Gifts from scarcity and begging are small. Gifts from abundance and wealth sharing are large. Painful giving is small. Enjoyable giving is large.

The message of the apologetic panhandler leads to painful, difficult, small fundraising. It takes from donors. It communicates scarcity. It projects need and crisis. This is bad for major gift fundraising. It rewards charity desperation. It reinforces the charity starvation cycle. This is bad for the charity.

The message of the Biblical fundraiser is the opposite. It offers enormous value to donors. It leads to enjoyable, transformational fundraising. It rewards charity strength. A stronger charity can better help the donor to create noble, inspirational, good works. This is good for major gift fundraising. It's good for the charity.

PART III

WRONG ROLES: THE ALWAYS-BE-CLOSING SALES MACHINE ☹

Contrasting roles

In fundraising, the always-be-closing sales machine might sound like this:

“Sales is sales, baby! Get in, make the hard ask, and get out. I’ll hit that quarterly goal no matter what! I’m a high-volume sales machine! Churn them and burn them!”

This is not Biblical fundraising. It might get some immediate cash. It might hit the next quarter’s goal. But it’s not a ministry. It’s not about the donor’s spiritual well-being. It’s not about helping the donor at all.

Would we take this callous approach in a ministry to older widows? No. Would we use it in a ministry to older men? No. Nor would we use it in a ministry to younger widows or younger men. So, we shouldn’t use it in this ministry either. It doesn’t fit the ministry to the rich. It doesn’t fit the ministry of major gift fundraising. It doesn’t match scripture.

This role uses the wrong relationship. This fundraiser does not “come alongside” the donor. Instead, this is a hit-and-run attack. It’s a high-volume game of machine-gun asking. It isn’t trying to minister to the donors. It’s just targeting them.

This role also uses the wrong time frame. The approach is purely short term. It’s only about getting fast cash now. The scriptural role is the opposite. It focuses on the donor’s long-

term outcomes. The donor stores up “a good foundation for the future.”

This isn't just a one-time transaction. It's a long-term transformation. The donor becomes “generous and ready to share.” This is a repeated, ongoing identity.³⁹ He doesn't just do one good work. Instead, he becomes “rich in good works.” This is a long-term result. It's a lifetime result. It helps the donor “take hold of that which is truly life.”

Ministry relationships are not hit-and-run interactions. They are ongoing. The Biblical role matches this. It focuses on persistently ministering to the donor for long-term outcomes. The pushy salesperson role is different. It focuses only on immediate financial results. It doesn't care about the donor.

These two roles conflict. Embracing the Biblical ministry role means rejecting the always-be-closing sales role.

Problems for fundraisers

This character is bad for the donor. It's also bad for the fundraiser. Here, the fundraiser's role is only about grabbing the cash. The work itself is not meaningful. Only the money has value, not the work.

This is a recipe for burnout. Being competitive and hitting goals can be motivational. But what happens when the goal is missed? The work itself wasn't meaningful. It didn't provide value to the donor. It was never intended to. And now, the money doesn't come in either. What's left? Nothing. The biggest loser is the fundraiser.

One study found a similar result.⁴⁰ At some charities, the fundraiser's job was just to sell. Communication with donors was “a one-way avenue.” Donors were targets, not

partners. The charity “spews forth” information to donors. Researchers explained that in these organizations,

“In terms of fundraising, the interests of donors are outstripped by the interests of the organization.”

At these charities, fundraising was far from being a ministry to donors.

The result? At these places, fundraisers reported the lowest

- Satisfaction with the charity
- Trust in the charity
- Commitment to the charity

Other charities were at the opposite end of the spectrum. Donor relationships were based on “two-way symmetry.” Communication was based on “mutuality,” “cooperation,” and “collaboration.” The result? These fundraisers reported the highest satisfaction, trust, and commitment.

As donor interactions move towards a ministry-type relationship, fundraiser satisfaction increases. As they move towards high-pressure sales, fundraiser satisfaction falls.

The always-be-closing salesperson character leads to bad results. It leads to bad results for the donor. It leads to bad results for the fundraiser. No surprise then, it also leads to bad results for fundraising.

Problems for charities

In the short term, the always-be-closing hard-sell might seem like an answer. Yes, it can pressure the donor into a gift. But it doesn't lead to a major lifetime investment. Yes, it can

help to hit the next quarter's target. But it also undermines long-term growth.

The problem is simple. Would we want to be treated this way? Violating the "golden rule" is bad ethics. We know that. But in the long term, it's also bad business. When the goal is to take from the customer, relationships will be short. This can still work. But it works only for quick, one-time transactions. It won't work for major, ongoing, lifetime investments.

This isn't just theology. It's real-world business. Of course, in business, there is no "ministry to the rich." But there are high-capacity clients. Those who sell to high-capacity clients aren't called salespeople. They're called "strategic account managers." The rules in this world of high-capacity clients are different. In this world, the always-be-closing salesperson fails.

Here's how business researchers describe the differences:

"The objectives of salespeople are the opposite of the objectives of Strategic Account Managers.... Salespeople who remain strictly focused on sales instead of customers (i.e., seeking to close short-term deals or working only to reach their monthly targets or their quota) might show a propensity to fail as future Strategic Account Managers ... If they have a short-term selling approach, then they most likely should not attempt to transition to Strategic Account Management."⁴¹

Dealing with high-capacity customers is different. Short-term, aggressive sales approaches don't work. Instead, success requires long-term, consultative relationships that provide real value.⁴²

Scripture matches these modern business realities. The ministry to high-capacity donors is separate. It's a special animal. It has special rules. It focuses on long-term donor benefit. It emphasizes valuable outcomes for the donor.

High-pressure techniques can work for small, one-time decisions. They can trigger "pocket change" donations. But fundraising success doesn't come from these decisions. It comes from decisions to share wealth. It comes from the donors who have wealth to share.

In this world, the always-be-closing sales machine doesn't work. What works is following the guidance from this passage. What works is Biblical fundraising.

PART IV

WRONG ROLES: THE SIDELINE GAWKER ☹

Contrasting roles

In fundraising, the sideline gawker might sound like this:

“Oh, no, I could never talk to someone rich like that. I don’t know anything about their world. They probably want to talk about art or stock options or the best helicopter to take to the Hamptons. I wouldn’t know what to say. Look, I’m fine to fundraise. But I’ll stick to talking with regular folks like me.”

This doesn’t match our passage. 1 Timothy 6:17 begins with the bold phrase: *Tois plousiois* [To the rich]. It describes a ministry to a specific group. It describes a ministry *to the rich*.

In this ministry, we come alongside [*para*] the rich person to deliver an authorized message [*angelles*]. The sideline gawker does not “come alongside” [*para*] the rich person. He never even gets close.

What’s the solution? 1 Timothy 6 reminds us that these wealth differences are only momentary. We can’t take wealth with us. (1 Timothy 6:7). The donor is rich, but only “in the now time.”⁴³ (1 Timothy 6:17). Wealth is “uncertain” and “disappearing.”⁴⁴ (1 Timothy 6:17). These are just temporary circumstances. They’re short term. They’re about to disappear.

Understanding this affects our approach. Psalm 49:16 instructs,

“Do not be overawed when others grow rich, when the

splendor of their houses increases; for they will take nothing with them when they die” (NIV).

The sideline gawker forgets this. He stays away because he is “overawed.” He stays away because he is “afraid.”⁴⁵ Don’t be “overawed.” Don’t be “afraid.”⁴⁶ Don’t let wealth be a barrier to ministering to this people group.

Problems for ministry

It’s easy to understand these feelings. Ministering to people in other groups can be uncomfortable. But imagine if we took the same approach elsewhere. It might sound like this:

“Yes, I know the Bible says to visit those in prison. But I could never talk to someone in prison. I don’t know anything about their world. They probably want to talk about tattoos, stabbings, or something. I wouldn’t know what to say. Look, I’m fine with ministering to some people. But I’ll just stick to talking with regular folks like me.”

These feelings are natural. Yes, it would be easier to talk only to others like us. It would be easier to ignore those in different circumstances. But that’s not what scripture calls us to do.

Timothy was not to minister only to others like him. Paul directed the opposite approach. Paul told Timothy to minister to those who were very much *not* like him.

What would a young man know about the world of older widows? Or older men? Would he easily relate to the concerns of younger women? Of course not. Yet, Paul directs Timothy to minister to these specific groups. And he includes one more group: the rich.

Yes, it's uncomfortable. Reaching others who are different isn't easy. We might minister to widows, young people, prisoners, or cowboys. Each group will have its differences. But ministering means adapting to these differences.⁴⁷ It means learning and adjusting.

Ministering to the people group

Ministering to a specific group starts by understanding their world. Suppose our group cares about Star Trek. Then we should learn a bit about Star Trek. We do this even if we aren't fans of the show.

This idea applies to any group. If we're ministering to prisoners, we should learn what's important to them. If it's to widows, older men, or younger women, again, we would do the same.

So, too, this is true with the rich. If they care about the markets and managing wealth, we should learn about that. If they care about capital gains taxes, we should know a bit about that. It's not an excuse to say we aren't wealthy. That's not the point. We are ministering to this group. We need to understand what's important to them.

It's certainly easier to talk only with others who are like us. It's easier only to minister to those we relate to effortlessly. But that's not scriptural. The Biblical mandate is often to minister to those who are very different from us. We don't stand on the sidelines and gawk. We jump in. We learn. We get involved.

Ministry doesn't sit on the sidelines: Go see them

This passage describes a ministry. It's a ministry to a specific group. As with any ministry, it starts with a simple

step: Go see them.

Can you be an effective youth minister if you never speak to young people? No. Can you effectively minister to prisoners if you never go to a prison? Nope. Can you be an effective minister to older widows if you never visit with one? Of course not.

Ministry starts with, “Go see them.” So, how do we do this in the ministry to the rich? It’s the same as any other people group. We learn. We help. We connect.

Suppose our people group was high school students. First, we learn. We learn where they hang out. We help. We offer attractive programs that appeal to them. We connect. We use referrals (friends) to connect with others in their people group. We connect with their advisors (parents, teachers). We get those folks to volunteer in our programs.

These same ideas apply to other people groups. They apply to the rich. We learn. We learn what’s important to them. We learn about their challenges, their concerns, and their lives. We help. We offer attractive programs that appeal to them. We connect. We use referrals (friends) to connect with others in their people group. We connect with their advisors. We get those folks to volunteer in our programs.

Fundraising doesn’t sit on the sidelines: Go see them

Any ministry starts with “Go see them.” But it’s not always easy. In fundraising, a constant temptation is to stay in the office. We can be at every meeting. We can protect our political turf. We can immediately respond to the boss’s every request. We can be “good employees.” But there’s a problem with staying in the office. Our donors aren’t there. Our ministry isn’t there.

The most effective fundraising organizations are good at something. They're good at freeing their fundraisers to "Go see them." One consultant explains it this way:

"What could be easier than focusing on the few who can make major gifts and seeing them? Yet, not seeing donors is the most significant and common barrier to success. What's going on? Most major gift fundraisers have other duties—special events, reports, meetings—that appear more 'urgent' than making visits.... Fundraisers fall victim to the tyranny of the urgent and lose focus."⁴⁸

After my college presidency, another small college asked me to take over their fundraising. I turned the offer down. I explained that I no longer wanted to be on the road, visiting donors. They responded that they wouldn't require that. Yet, I still had to turn it down. The offer was kind, but it was unrealistic. They could say I didn't need to visit donors. But they couldn't change reality. The ministry of major gift fundraising starts with "Go see them."

Scripture makes this explicit. This ministry comes alongside [*para*] the rich. It does so to deliver an authorized message [*angelle*]. *Para* means "from close-beside"⁴⁹ or even "close-up and personal."⁵⁰ If we do not deliver our message from "close-beside" or "close-up and personal," we aren't following this passage.

Such advice is not new to fundraising. In his 1966 book, *Si Seymour* quotes Harvard's lead fundraiser as saying,

"No cow will let down her milk in response to a letter or a telephone call. You've got to sit down beside her and go to work."⁵¹

This old quote continues to be popular in modern fundraising advice.⁵² Of course, “milking a cow” may not be a ministry mindset.⁵³ Still, it does emphasize being “close-beside” or “close-up and personal!”

Whether from the 2020’s, the 1960’s, or the A.D. 60’s, fundraising advice is the same. Major gift fundraising takes place “close-up and personal.” Gawking from the sidelines might feel safer. Staying in the office to work on branding guidelines might be more comfortable. But it’s not major gift fundraising. It’s not this ministry.

Embracing the Biblical role means rejecting the sideline gawker role. The scriptural ministry starts with “Go see them.” It’s *parangelle*. It’s coming alongside [*para*] the rich to deliver an authorized message [*angelle*]. The sideline gawker stays in the office. He leaves out the “*para*” part of *parangelle*. The next role is wrong in a different way. It leaves out the “*angelle*” part of *parangelle*

PART V

WRONG ROLES: THE FRIEND-RAISING SOCIALITE ☹

Contrasting roles

In fundraising, the friend-raising socialite might sound like this:

“The only thing that matters is building relationships. This means meeting and greeting. It means putting on good events. It means engaging on social media. It means building a community.”

This is not Biblical fundraising – at least not yet. The goals of the friend-raising socialite can be good. They can create a great environment for Biblical fundraising. But they aren't Biblical fundraising.

The verb in this passage is *parangelle*. *Parangelle* is what the fundraiser does. He comes alongside [*para*] the rich to deliver an authorized message [*angelle*]. The friend-raising socialite gets the first part. He comes alongside. But the message is missing.

This is a problem. Delivering the message is the point. If we're not delivering the authorized message, we're not engaging in this ministry. We're not engaging in *parangelle*.

Of course, the setting for the message is important. It should be part of a ministry relationship. It should connect the donor with a fellowship community. But building the right setting for the message isn't the message. The ministry still requires delivering the message.

The focus of this passage is the message. Delivering the message is the verb. Pick your favorite translation. You might prefer “instruct,”⁵⁴ “teach,”⁵⁵ “tell,”⁵⁶ “counsel,”⁵⁷ “direct,”⁵⁸ “charge,”⁵⁹ or simply, “Here’s what you say.”⁶⁰ Regardless, the point is always the same. The point is delivering an authorized message about generosity.

The temptation of easy

Delivering the message is the point of this ministry. It’s also the hard part. It’s easy to find event organizers. It’s easy to find social media managers. It’s hard to find fundraisers.

This ministry is difficult. If we ask (or offer) a lot, we’ll hear “no” a lot. If we instruct people to be generous, many will reject our instruction. It can be tempting to avoid these hard parts. It can be tempting to do only the easy stuff.

The work of the friend-raising socialite is more attractive. It feels a little like fundraising, but it’s emotionally easier. It’s less stressful. There’s no rejection. There’s no stigma. But there is a problem. If we don’t deliver the message, we won’t be fulfilling this ministry.

This temptation is real. Suppose a charity holds an event for donors. This creates a deadline. It creates urgency. The fundraiser can help! The fundraiser can fold napkins. He can hang balloons and stuff invitations. And it’s all part of fundraising!

But it’s not the hard part. It doesn’t use the rare and valuable skill of personally encouraging generosity. It’s not the work of *parangelle*. It’s a distraction from this work.

Dividing the work

How do we avoid this temptation? If possible, separate the tasks. Those who are skilled at *parangelle* should focus on that task. They should focus on delivering the authorized message. Others can focus on the other stuff. We see an example of this kind of separation in Acts 6:2-7.

“So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.’ ... So the word of God spread.”

In the same way, it is not desirable to neglect the scriptural ministry of major gift fundraising to fold napkins for the next donor event. It doesn’t mean that napkin folding isn’t important. It still needs to be done. But it’s not a rare and valuable skill.

Whenever possible, just as in Acts 6, separate these tasks. The always-urgent, day-to-day necessities must be done. But don’t let them interfere with the scriptural ministry of major gift fundraising.

There’s nothing wrong with social events. There’s nothing wrong with being a friend-raising socialite. But these things are not the ministry of major gift fundraising. Embracing the Biblical role means moving beyond the friend-raising socialite role.

PART VI

WRONG ROLES: THE CLASS-CONFLICT CRUSADER ☹

Contrasting roles

In fundraising, the class-conflict crusader might sound like this:

“These rich people better be giving, and a lot! It’s not fair that they lucked into such privilege. Most of them probably got there by exploiting others anyway. Giving is the least they can do. (Frankly, they shouldn’t even have that choice. We should just tax them more.) And they had better not give an opinion about how their gifts should be used! They should redistribute the wealth and keep their mouths shut!”

This is not Biblical fundraising. It starts with the wrong relationship. The fundraiser does not come alongside the rich person. Instead, he’s above the rich person. He’s morally superior to the rich person. He’s politically superior to the rich person. In this worldview, the rich person is, by definition, a villain.

This is not a ministry relationship. In fact, it prevents a ministry relationship. Imagine having a prison ministry while believing that all prisoners were bad people. Imagine having a youth ministry while believing that all teenagers were rotten.

This doesn’t work. A rigid distaste for any group blocks an effective ministry to that group. Being an effective minister to the rich cannot start by hating the rich.

This seems simple, but it can be a challenge. Many political philosophies promote conflict. Rich against poor. Labor against capital. Race against race. Nation against nation. Each of these stories has a villain. Rejecting a favorite villain-story isn't easy. Many can't do it. But we can't effectively minister to villains. Ministry requires empathy. We can minister only to those we care about.

A belief that rich people are villains cannot fit with this ministry. If these are bad people, we won't want to benefit them. We won't want them to have a lasting "treasure." We won't want them to embrace "that which is life indeed." We certainly won't want to help them "enjoy" their wealth. We won't want them to be both rich and "rich in good deeds," too.

We don't want any of these things for villains. Instead, we want them to make amends. We want them to express remorse. Ideally, we want them to disappear. In the perfect world of class conflict, they shouldn't even exist.

Real-world results

People sometimes try to apply this worldview to fundraising. These political pontificators forget one thing. Giving is a choice. A message that gives the middle finger to your high-capacity donors probably isn't going to work.

We can believe they are villains. But they don't have to believe that. We can believe they should feel guilty. But they don't have to believe that. We can believe in forced wealth redistribution. But they don't have to.

In truth, those who believe the class-conflict story usually don't understand philanthropy. Their goal is wealth

redistribution. They look at philanthropy and say,

“This is inefficient! A Marxist with a gun could accomplish much more wealth redistribution!”

But philanthropy isn't about class conflict. It's not even primarily about wealth redistribution. It's about bringing beauty, discovery, and love into the world. It's about creating noble, inspirational “good works.”

Real-world community

This conflict goes deeper. The goal here isn't just to fundraise. It's not just to get the rich person to give. It's to get them to share.

Sharing requires a mutual partnership. In our passage, the word for share is *koinōnikous*. This means sharing with the *koinōnia*. The *koinōnia* is the fellowship community. This ministry to the rich pulls them into the fellowship community.

This shared community of rich and poor is unusual. The natural tendency is to separate rich and poor. James objects strongly to this separation inside the church. (James 2:2-4).

The ministry of major gift fundraising also fights against this separation. It pulls the wealthy person into the shared fellowship. Commenting on our passage, Professor Ronald Ward explains,

“When the church is as it ought to be, the question of wealth does not determine fellowship, which is in Christ and not in wealth or in the absence of wealth.”⁶¹

Writing nearly a century earlier, Alfred Rowland comments,

“This evidently implies that none were shut out from fellowship because they were wealthy;”⁶²

Bringing the rich into the shared community is anathema to the class conflict crusader. His worldview won't allow it. The rich person is the villain. He is the enemy. He is the outsider.

The scriptural ministry reverses this. It pulls the rich person into the community. It makes him a partner. It makes him an insider. It makes him a friend. The rich person becomes "one of us."

These messages oppose each other. One gives a message of conflict. It separates us. The other gives a message of shared community. It brings us together. In fundraising, embracing the Biblical role means rejecting the class-conflict crusader role.

PART VII

WRONG ROLES: THE TEETH-GRITTING MARTYR ☹

Contrasting roles

In fundraising, the teeth-gritting martyr might sound like this:

“Fundraising is the worst part of my job. But we have to have the money. Someone has to keep the doors open. I just need to suck it up, hold my nose, and get it done!”

This is not Biblical fundraising. Instead, fundraising is seen as distasteful. It’s done only when absolutely necessary. It’s just an unpleasant way to get cash. The work itself has no inherent value. It’s not meaningful. It’s not important. It’s not ministry. It’s just an unpleasant chore done for money. It’s done as little as possible. It’s stopped as soon as possible.

For the Biblical fundraiser, the work is different. It’s a scripturally authorized ministry. It transforms donors’ lives. It delivers lasting value to them. It’s work with deep meaning. It’s work with inherent value.

The ministry of major gift fundraising does produce money. It does result in giving. It results in big, generous gifts. This complements the charity’s mission. But its mission is separate. It’s not a ministry to the charity. It’s not a ministry to the charity’s leaders, employees, or beneficiaries. It’s a ministry to the donors.

Bad results for fundraisers

The teeth-gritting martyr approach is bad for fundraisers. In this view, the fundraiser does unpleasant work. He does it to get money.

If he fails, an important cause suffers. Beneficiaries feel the pain. Good people are fired. The mission stalls. If he succeeds, it's only temporary. That success becomes next year's new budget. Expectations are reset. The fundraiser must now do more of the unpleasant work. Otherwise, he fails.

Often, things get even worse. The charity has a financial crisis. Or it kicks off a campaign. The demands for cash intensify. Now, the fundraiser must do even more of the unpleasant task. He must do it on an intense deadline. Otherwise, he fails.

This negative view makes fundraising stressful. It makes the job unattractive. It leads to quick burnout and high turnover. These results aren't just hypothetical. The ongoing crisis in fundraiser retention is real.⁶³

A charity might have a great mission. It might represent a worthy cause. It might desperately need money. But this isn't enough. This justifies fundraising only as: "We need money, so go get some." This explains why money is important. But it says nothing about the work itself. Just needing money doesn't make the work itself meaningful.

Good results for fundraisers

In Biblical fundraising, the work itself is a ministry. The fundraiser ministers to the donor. The fundraiser helps the donor. The fundraising process provides real benefits to the

donor. It benefits the donor's life today. It benefits the donor's life in the future.

This role can change everything for the fundraiser. Suppose the charity has a financial crisis. It desperately needs money. It needs it right away. For the teeth-gritting martyr, this means massive stress. It leads to predictable burnout.

Things are different for the Biblical fundraiser. The crisis need not be stressful. It's not stressful because it's not a crisis for the fundraiser's ministry. Instead, it can be a fantastic opportunity. A crisis can be a reason to encourage sharing. It can provide opportunities for a heroic donor to save the day. It can provide motivation for generosity and good works.

The charity may be in trouble. The charity's ministry may be facing catastrophe. But the fundraiser's ministry is separate. It supports the charity, but it's different. It's complementary, but it's not the same.

This difference is key. The fundraiser need not internalize the organization's stress. The fundraiser focuses on the fundraiser's ministry. That ministry is to the donors. The work benefits the donors personally and spiritually. It is meaningful and valuable.

The work does produce money. It produces a lot of money. But the money is not the point. The point is ministering to the donors.

This separate but complementary ministry need not be stressful. It need not lead to burnout. This scriptural ministry is good for fundraisers. It's also good for donors.

Contrasting results for donors

The teeth-gritting martyr views fundraising as unpleasant. It's unpleasant for fundraisers. It's also unpleasant for donors. It's seen as a burden on donors.

In this view, what's the nicest thing a charity could do for a donor? Stop fundraising. The perfect world is to get enough money to never fundraise again. Here, donor abandonment isn't just a risk. It's actually a goal.

This attitude towards fundraising is bad for donors. It creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the charity sees fundraising as burdensome for donors, it probably will be. If fundraising is just a way to take from donors, that's what it will do.

The teeth-gritting martyr views fundraising as unpleasant. This expectation then becomes reality. This approach expects, projects, and then delivers an unpleasant donor experience.

But when the goal changes, so do the outcomes. If the goal is to provide value to the donor, that's what will likely happen. If the role is to help the donor, that's what will result. When the goal is to minister to the donor, things change. Giving can become wonderful, inspirational, and enjoyable. The donor experience can become truly worth the gift.

The ministry of major gift fundraising makes this happen. It can come alongside donors and advise them how to accomplish real, intrinsic good. It can show them how to bring beautiful, noble, inspirational, good works into the world. It can help them connect more deeply with a fellowship community [*koinōnia*] through their giving [*koinōnikous*]. It can give donors "the treasure of a good foundation for the

future.” It can help them “take hold of that which is truly life.” It can create an amazing donor experience.

This process is good for donors. It’s good for fundraisers. And, ultimately, it’s also good for charities.

Contrasting results for charities

The teeth-gritting martyr sees fundraising as unpleasant. It’s just a way to take from donors. It can be justified only by desperate need. This leads to bad behavior and bad outcomes.

It results in charity starvation cycles. Suppose the charity receives a big grant. The teeth-gritting martyr celebrates:

“Wonderful! Now, we can cut fundraising! We can remove the burden of giving from donors!”

This isn’t just hypothetical. It’s how many charities are actually managed. National data from over 8,000 charities proves it.⁶⁴ A common response to receiving a large grant was to cut fundraising. The resulting drop in contributions often exceeded the size of the grant. These big grants resulted in less money, not more.

The teeth-gritting martyr celebrates a new grant by cutting fundraising. This sows the seeds of future crises. Fundraising eventually returns. It returns when there are no other options. Fundraising returns only when the starvation cycle hits bottom.

All this changes when the fundraiser’s role changes. The fundraiser delivers a meaningful ministry. He delivers a scripturally authorized message. He offers a donor experience that is worth the gift. He offers real value to the donor.

Suppose the charity receives a big grant. Is this a reason to kill this important ministry? No. Is it an excuse to stop delivering the authorized message about generosity? Of course not. Instead, it can have the opposite effect.

The outside grant becomes a fantastic opportunity to encourage generosity. The operating budget is covered. Imagine what exciting new “good works” the donor can now create! The donor is free to fund whatever impact is most meaningful to him. Fundraising becomes even more fun.

The abundance mindset of the scriptural ministry takes a big win and multiplies it. The scarcity mindset of the teeth-gritting martyr takes a big win and erases it.

The scriptural ministry conflicts with the teeth-gritting martyr. These worldviews are different. In many ways, they’re the opposite. In fundraising, embracing the Biblical role means rejecting the teeth-gritting martyr role.

CONCLUSION: THE RIGHT ROLE

These six fundraising roles don’t match our passage. They don’t match *parangelle*. Of course, the bad characters could continue. We could look at even more bad behaviors. But we don’t need to. We don’t need to remember what not to do. Instead, we can just focus on the right role. This makes the errors obvious.

The right role is the scriptural role. We come alongside [*para*] the rich person. We do this to deliver an authorized message [*angelle*] about generously sharing wealth. We deliver a message of wisdom from God. We fill the classic role of the wise, guiding sage. We’re the authorized messenger.

We're not just "money-getters." We're fulfilling a scriptural ministry. It's the ministry of major gift fundraising. That's the right role. That's the scriptural role.

- ¹ For an in-depth discussion of the translation of this word, see “The ministry relationship: the authorized messenger who comes alongside” in Chapter 2, *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.
- ² Bassoff, M. & Chandler, S. (2001) *RelationShift: Revolutionary fundraising*. Robert D. Reed Publishers. p. 1.
- ³ Breeze, B. (2017). *The new fundraisers: Who organizes charitable giving in contemporary society?* Policy Press. p. 118.
- ⁴ Baker, B., Bullock, K., Gifford, G. L., Grow, P., Jacobwith, L. L., Pitman, M. A., Truhlar, S., & Rees, S. (2013). *The essential fundraising handbook for small nonprofits*. The Nonprofit Academy. P. 172.
- ⁵ Eisenstein, A. (2014). *Major gift fundraising for small shops: How to leverage your annual fund in only five hours per week*. CharityChannel Press. p. 70.
- ⁶ Phillips, G. (2013). *The art of fundraising*. Phillips OnLine. p. 29.
- ⁷ Craver, R. M. (2017). *Retention fundraising: The new art and science of keeping your donors for life*. Emerson & Church, Publishers. p. 44.
- ⁸ Kihlstedt, A. (2013). *Asking styles: Harness your personal fundraising power*. CharityChannel Press. p. 31.
- ⁹ Klein, K. (2009). *Reliable fundraising in unreliable times: What good causes need to know to survive and thrive*. Jossey-Bass. p. 85.
- ¹⁰ Dillon, W. P. (2012). *People raising: A practical guide to raising funds*. Moody Publishers. p. 100; See also, “Be in charge and be persistent without being insulting.” [Edles, L. P. (2005). *Fundraising: Hands-on tactics for nonprofit groups*. McGraw-Hill. p. 115.]
- ¹¹ Greenhoe, J. (2013). *Opening the door to major gifts: Mastering the discovery call*. CharityChannel Press. p. 37.
- ¹² Ross, B., & Segal, C. (2008). *The influential fundraiser: Using the psychology of persuasion to achieve outstanding results*. John Wiley & Sons. Part V Persistence – Chapters 10, 11, and 12.
- ¹³ Morton, S. (2014). *Funding your ministry: An in-depth, Biblical guide for successfully raising personal support*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. p. 202.
- ¹⁴ Bristol, E. & Lysakowski, L. (2013). *The leaky bucket: What’s wrong with your fundraising and how you can fix it*. CharityChannel Press. p. 217.
- ¹⁵ Eskin, J. (2019). *10 Simple Fundraising Lessons: A common sense guide to overcoming your fear of asking for gifts*. Eskin Fundraising Training, LLC. p. 67.
- ¹⁶ Warwick, M. (2000). *The five strategies for fundraising success. A mission-based guide to achieving your goals*. Jossey-Bass. p. 255.
- ¹⁷ Kihlstedt, A. (2005). *Capital campaigns: Strategies that work*. Jones & Bartlett Learning. p. 10.
- ¹⁸ Levy, R. (2009). *Yours for the asking: An indispensable guide to fundraising and management*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 174.
- ¹⁹ Moulton, J. H. (1963). *A grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3, *Syntax*. T & T Clark. p. 74.

²⁰ Heidt, W. (1951). Translating New Testament imperatives. *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 13(3), 253-256. p. 255.

²¹ Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 121.

²² Million, H. (2006). *Fear-free fundraising: How to ask people for money*. Independently published. p. IV.

²³ Fredricks, L. (2010). *The ask: How to ask for support for your nonprofit cause, creative project, or business venture*. Jossey-Bass. p. 89.

²⁴ “The earliest known use of the noun fundraiser is in the 1880s.” [Fundraiser. (n.d.). In *Oxford English Dictionary*. https://www.oed.com/dictionary/fundraiser_n?tab=factsheet#3563830]

The first modern fundraising campaign wasn’t until 1905. This was a short intensive campaign for the YMCA. [See, e.g., Lindahl, W. (2010). *Principles of fundraising: Theory and practice*. Jones & Bartlett Learning. p. 77.]

The first modern comprehensive multi-year campaign started in 1915 for Harvard University. However, even this was conducted almost entirely by unpaid volunteers. Prior to this campaign, donations resulted almost exclusively from the private conversations of university leaders with the wealthiest supporters. [Kimball, B. (2014). The first campaign and the paradoxical transformation of fundraising in American higher education, 1915-1925. *Teachers College Record*, 116(7), 1-44.]

²⁵ Meisenbach, R. J., Rick, J. M., & Brandhorst, J. K. (2019). Managing occupational identity threats and job turnover: How former and current fundraisers manage moments of stigmatized identities. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 29(3), 383-399. p. 392.

²⁶ James III, R. N. (2016). Testing the effectiveness of fundraiser job titles in charitable bequest and complex gift planning. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 27(2), 165-179.

²⁷ James III, R. N. (2016). Testing the effectiveness of fundraiser job titles in charitable bequest and complex gift planning. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*. 27(2), 165-179.

²⁸ Aramaic Bible in Plain English

²⁹ See also King James Version, “Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you”; Good News Translation, “As for Titus, he is my partner and works with me to help you;” GOD’S WORD® Translation, “If any questions are raised, remember that Titus is my partner and coworker to help you.” Webster’s Bible Translation, “If any inquire concerning Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you”. Paul writes to the Corinthian donors that Titus is Paul’s fellow-worker [*synergos*]. But Titus is a special kind of worker. He works “for you” [*eis hymas*].

³⁰ Perdue, P. E. (2014). *May I cultivate you? Careers in fundraising*. Petar Publishing. p. 3.

³¹ Instead of president, you can use whatever your leadership is called such as Executive Director, CEO, Senior Pastor, Elders, Board of Directors, or, as in Titus’ case, Apostle.

³² See testing of this phrase in James, R. N. (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27(2), 998-1011.

³³ Clark, D. (Nov 11, 2012). To succeed in sales, suspend your self-interest. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dorieclark/2012/11/11/to-succeed-in-sales-suspend-your-self-interest/?sh=14e62c205475>

³⁴ The description continues, “This involved exploiting those perceptions by acting contrary to them. A manager (no. 1) of used car salespeople provided an example: ... I say, ‘Hey take a minute here with me and let me give you Sam’s crash course on car buying ... I’ll educate you. I’ll ... protect you against those out there who would take advantage of your ignorance.’ And that way ... when they go and meet those types that are still trying to play the manipulation games ... people are going to be aware of it and go, ‘Hey, that’s what Sam told us.’ Then my word is going to be validated, and they’ll come back to me and say, ‘Sam, take care of us.’” [Ashforth, B. E., Kreiner, G. E., Clark, M. A., & Fugate, M. (2007). Normalizing dirty work: Managerial tactics for countering occupational taint. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1), 149-174. p. 159.]

³⁵ Indeed, publicizing named donors to ministry is the consistent practice in scripture from Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2) and Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37) to Joanna, Susanna, Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:1-3), or Mary of Bethany (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9).

³⁶ “Participants’ perceptions of requestor need moderated the effect of LPC [Legitimizing Paltry Contributions] messages on compliance ... The effects of LPC [Legitimizing Paltry Contributions] messages on compliance were greater as the perceived need of the requestor increased.” [Bolkan, S., & Rains, S. A. (2017). The legitimization of paltry contributions as a compliance-gaining technique: A meta-analysis testing three explanations. *Communication Research*, 44(7), 976-996.]; “Neediness was also a mechanism that explained legitimizing paltry contributions. When someone said “even a penny would help”, many donors saw the recipient as more needy” [Noetel, M., Slattery, P., Saeri, A. K., Lee, J., Houlden, T., Farr, N., ... & Schubert, S. (2020). What works to increase charitable donations? A meta-review with meta-meta-analysis. p. 20. *PsyArXiv* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-022-00499-y>]

³⁷ In face-to-face, high-pressure, immediate response donation requests, this technique, called Legitimizing Paltry Contributions (LPC), increases the share of people who will make a gift. However, when people have time and freedom to decide later, it does not work. [See, e.g., Reeves, R. A., Macolini, R. M., & Martin, R. C. (1987). Legitimizing Paltry Contributions: On-the-spot vs. Mail-in Requests. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 17(8), 731-738.; Reeves, R. A., & Saucer, P. R. (1993). A test of commitment in legitimizing paltry contributions. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 8(3), 537.]

³⁸ E.g., “In our study, the most effective way of getting large donations was to ask for a large amount.” [Doob, A. N., & McLaughlin, D. S. (1989). Ask and you shall be given: Request size and donations to a good cause. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 19(12), 1049-1056.]

“Results show that a large anchorpoint increases average contributions, legitimization of paltry contributions enhances compliance rate.” [Fraser, C., Hite, R. E., & Sauer, P. L. (1988). Increasing contributions in solicitation campaigns: The use of large and small anchorpoints. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 284-287.]

Results show, “(1) a ‘scale-back’ effect, in which low defaults reduce average donation amounts; (2) a ‘lower-bar’ effect, in which defaulting a low amount increases donation rate” [Goswami, I., & Urmitsky, O. (2016). When should the ask be a nudge? The effect of default amounts on charitable donations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(5), 829-846.]

"In four studies (N = 2,725), when we inform participants of the cost of a unit of impact (e.g. the cost of a mosquito net), they perversely donate less when the cost is cheaper." [Lewis, J., & Small, D. (2019). Ineffective altruism: Giving less when donations do more good. *SSRN*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3399121>]

This tradeoff was recognized in early fundraising researcher. See, e.g., "Thus, while minimal requests are likely to lead to high percentages of compliance, they are unlikely to produce highly desirable outcomes for the requester." [Cialdini, R. B., & Schroeder, D. A. (1976). Increasing compliance by legitimizing paltry contributions: When even a penny helps. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34(4), 599-604, p. 599.]

³⁹ For example, in 1 Timothy 6:18 *eumetadotous* ("generous") modifies *einai* ("to be"). The word *einai* is the present infinitive active form of *eimi*, the verb defined as "I exist, I am." In Greek, the present tense often implies continuing or repeated action. The present tense of this verb can be used as the ultimate reference to a long-term, continuing identity. In 1 John 4:8, "God is love" uses this verb in the present indicative active (*estin*), there in the third person singular. John 4:16, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" also uses this verb in the present indicative active (*eimi*), there in the third person singular. Thus, "to be generous" in our passage appears to reference the donors' long-term, ongoing identity, rather than just a one-time act.

⁴⁰ Tindall, N. T., & Waters, R. D. (2010). The relationship between fundraising practice and job satisfaction at historically Black colleges and universities. *International Journal of Educational Advancement*, 10(3), 198-215.

⁴¹ Lacoste, S. (2018). From selling to managing strategic customers – a competency analysis. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 38(1), 92-122.

⁴² Peters, L., Ivens, B. S., & Pardo, C. (2020). Identification as a challenge in key account management: Conceptual foundations and a qualitative study. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 90, 300-313; Wilson, K., & Woodburn, D. (2014). The impact of organisational context on the failure of key and strategic account management programmes. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 29(5), 353-363.

⁴³ The 1 Timothy 6:17-19 ministry is, "to those who are rich in this present world" or "in this present age." Literally, the words reference those who are rich "in the now time" [*en tō nyn aiōni*]: "in [*en*] the [*tō*] now [*nyn*] time [*aiōni*]." The word *nyn* is defined as "now, the present" and *aiōn* is "a space of time, an age." [Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson. p. 9, 50; Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company.]

⁴⁴ *Adēlotēti* describes wealth as uncertain, disappearing, or hidden. [Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson. p. 8.]

⁴⁵ "Hence we may observe, (1.) Ministers must not be afraid of the rich;" [Henry, M. (1710/1935). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible* (Vol. 6). Fleming H. Revell Publishers. p. 831.]

⁴⁶ Psalm 49:16-17a, "Do not be afraid when a person becomes rich, When the splendor of his house is increased; For when he dies, he will take nothing with him;"

⁴⁷ Perhaps the most extreme version of this adjustment is described by Paul when he writes of his ministry, "To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might gain Jews; to those who are under the Law, I became as one under the Law, though not being

under the Law myself, so that I might gain those who are under the Law; to those who are without the Law, I became as one without the Law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might gain those who are without the Law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some." (1 Corinthians 9:20-22a).

⁴⁸ Daniel, J. P. (2009, January 26). *Cold calls, the first hurdle*. BWF. <https://www.bwf.com/published-by-bwf/cold-calls-the-first-hurdle/>

⁴⁹ "3853 *paraggéllō* (from 3844 /*pará*, 'from close-beside' and *aggéllō*, 'inform') ... literally means 'pass a message along closely'". For another example of the "*para*" prefix in communication, see "3870 *parakaléō* (from 3844 /*pará*, 'from close-beside' and 2564 /*kaléō*, 'to call') – properly, 'make a call' from being 'close-up and personal.'" [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2020). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.]

⁵⁰ "3870 *parakaléō* (from 3844 /*pará*, 'from close-beside' and 2564 /*kaléō*, 'to call') – properly, 'make a call' from being 'close-up and personal.'" [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2020). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.]

⁵¹ "In the wonderful words of James R. Reynolds, mastermind of the \$82-million Program for Harvard College, 'No cow will let down her milk in response to a letter or a telephone call. You have got to sit down beside her and go to work.'" [Seymour, H. J. (1999). *Designs for fund-raising: Principles, patterns, techniques* (2nd ed.). The Taft Group. p. 30.]

⁵² This quote appears in various forms in modern fundraising advice. [See, e.g., Wootton, J. B. (2017). *Real estate gift: How your church can acquire major gifts without badgering donors* (2nd ed.). American Charter. p. 88.] Other permutations include "as Si Seymour used to say, 'You can't milk a cow with a letter.'" [Pitman, M. A. (2008). *Ask without fear! A simple guide to connecting donors with what matters to them most*. Tremendous Life Books. p. 28]; "You can't milk a cow by sending it a letter. You have to pull up a stool and get to work." — Si Seymour" [Hafele, B. (2015, August 4). *The new social media platform that is 100% guaranteed to improve your major gift fundraising outcomes*. Dickersonbakker. <https://dickersonbakker.com/improve-your-major-gift-fundraising/>.]; "Legendary fundraiser Harold 'Si' Seymour said something to the effect that a cow never lets down her milk because of a letter or phone call; you've got to sit down with her." [Hayslett, J., & Peyton, A. (2021, October 25). *The importance of knowing how and when to make the ask*. <https://www.tsne.org/blog/importance-knowing-how-and-when-make-ask/>]; "You won't get milk from a cow by sending a letter ... The only way to get milk from a cow is to sit by its side and milk it." [Axelrad, C. (2022). *Neuroscience meets fundraising: The gentle art of teaching the joy of giving*. Bloomerang. <https://bloomerang.co/blog/neuroscience-meets-fundraising-gentle-art-of-teaching-joy-of-giving/>];

⁵³ Although consider 1 Corinthians 9:7, "Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not consume some of the milk of the flock?"

⁵⁴ New American Standard Bible, 2020

⁵⁵ New Living Translation

⁵⁶ Common English Bible

⁵⁷ Professor Ceslas Spicq, describing this word in the noun form, *parangelias*, explains that it "can take on the mild sense of exhortation or counsel," citing

THE BIBLICAL FUNDRAISER IN MODERN PRACTICE

Plutarch's *Politika Paraggelmata*, a collection of "political advice." [Spicq, C. (1994). *Theological lexicon of the New Testament* (Vol. 3). Hendrickson Publishers. p. 10.]

⁵⁸ Tree of Life Bible

⁵⁹ King James Version

⁶⁰ The Voice

⁶¹ Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 122.

⁶² Rowland, A. (1887). *Paul's First letter to Timothy*. James Nesbit & Co. p. 279.

⁶³ See, e.g., Bell, J. & Cornelius, M. (2013). *Under developed: A national study of challenges facing nonprofit fundraising*. CompassPoint Nonprofit Services; Joslyn, H. (2019, August 4). *Why fundraisers leave, and how to keep them*. The Chronicle of Philanthropy. <https://www.philanthropy.com>

⁶⁴ Andreoni, J., & Payne, A. A. (2011). Is crowding out due entirely to fundraising? Evidence from a panel of charities. *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(5-6), 334-343.

Chapter 3

Message 1: You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this!

- *Biblical fundraising starts with the donor's past and continuing identity: They will give because of who they are.*
- *Ordinary fundraising starts with the charity's identity: They're supposed to give because of who we are.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world **not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches**, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

TELLING THE RIGHT FUNDRAISING STORY

Real-world fundraising

How does this passage align with actual major gift fundraising? Modern best practices focus on high-capacity donors. Scripture matches this. This ministry is only "to the rich."

But capacity isn't enough. They must also share our values and goals. Otherwise, they would never support our cause.

Scripture matches this, too. This ministry is not to all the rich. It's only to the rich who are in the church. They've

already decided to follow Jesus. In modern terms, they have capacity and affinity.

That’s the right group. But just identifying them is not enough. Effective fundraising requires a relationship. Scripture matches this, too.

In scripture, this is a “close-beside” ministry relationship. The fundraiser “comes alongside” the rich person [*para*]. He delivers an authorized message [*angelle*].

The goal of this type of instruction is not just financial. It’s deeply relational. Earlier in the letter, Paul explains,

“But the goal of our instruction [*parangelias*] is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith.” (1 Timothy 1:5).

Both scripture and modern major gift fundraising start with

- High-capacity donors or prospects
- Who care about your cause
- With whom you have a relationship

Once we have these, we’re ready to deliver a fundraising message. So, what is it? What’s the right fundraising message? Scripture gives that, too. And that message is a story.

The power of story: Key elements

Perhaps no topic is more popular in modern fundraising advice than storytelling. Storytelling is popular because storytelling works. It’s the most powerful way to communicate a message. Storytelling is memorable. Storytelling sticks.

And what is a story? A story has key elements. It has

1. **Character.** A story is about someone. It will have a main character.
2. **Setting.** This is the story's world. It's a reference point that establishes norms and expectations. If we're in the Old West, we'll expect Old West things. If we're on a spaceship, we'll expect very different things.
3. **Backstory.** This establishes the main character's identity. This comes from his people, values, or life history. These will motivate him to accept the call to adventure.
4. **Call to adventure.** This challenges the main character to act. It starts the journey. The main character accepts the challenge. His backstory compels him to do so.
5. **Climax.** The main character completes the journey and wins a victory.
6. **Resolution.** This confirms the main character's victory. It also confirms his personal growth or transformation resulting from the journey.

Timothy's message is a story: Key elements

Paul gives a fundraising message for Timothy to share. That message is a story. It has all six story elements:

1. **Character.** This is a story about someone. It's about the donor. The main character is the high-capacity donor.
2. **Setting.** This story is set in the land of wealth sharing. This isn't subtle. This one sentence references accumulated wealth seven times.¹ This isn't a story about disposable income gifts. It's not a story about pocket change decisions. It's a story about the donor's

stored wealth. This reference point sets the story's norms and expectations.

3. **Backstory.** This story starts with the donor's past and continuing identity. It starts with his backstory. This backstory will motivate him to accept the call to adventure.
4. **Call to adventure.** The donor is challenged to act. He's challenged to enjoy his wealth by sharing generously. He will accept this challenge. His backstory compels him to do so. Why? Because of his people – he's not above or separated from the fellowship community. Because of his values – he has not set his hope on wealth, but on God. Because of his life history – he's experienced a life of God richly supplying him with all things. He's responding in kind to God's generosity.
5. **Climax.** The donor will win a victory. He will "do good." Even more, he will win many victories! He will be "rich in good works."
6. **Resolution.** The donor wins philanthropic victories. The resolution confirms their meaningfulness. They matter. They will have a lasting impact. The donor will "store up for himself the treasure of a good foundation for the future." But this journey isn't only about external victories. The donor is also personally transformed. This journey helps him to "take hold of that which is truly life."

This passage has a powerful fundraising message. That fundraising message is a story. It has every story element. It outlines every step in the donor's journey.

When charities tell bad stories: Wrong elements

When major gift fundraising fails, one of these pieces is

often missing. Maybe there's no high-capacity audience. (The audience doesn't have the resources for a major gift.) Maybe there's no affinity. (Their values don't match the charity, cause, or project.) Maybe there's no relationship. (There's no personal connection.)

Or maybe the message is wrong. Charities may be missing some parts of the major gift fundraising story. Sometimes, they're missing all the parts:

1. **Wrong character.** Their story is not about the donor. It's about their charity. Their organization is the hero. The donor is just a bit player.
2. **Wrong setting.** Their story is not about wealth sharing. It's about disposable income gifts. It's about pocket change decisions. They don't dare to have a conversation about the donor's accumulated wealth.
3. **Wrong backstory.** Their story isn't about the donor's identity. It's about the charity's identity. The message is, "We're fantastic! Can we have some money, please?"
4. **Wrong "call to adventure."** This is just a naked ask for money. It links no result with the donor's backstory. It promises no victory. It buys no specific "good work." It doesn't answer, "What changes if I give?"
5. **Wrong climax.** The gift creates no victory. It produces no specific good work. It fails to answer the question, "I gave. What changed?" Any impact from one gift is unknown or unstated. Instead, the donor is supposed to give because the charity is so wonderful. The charity is the one that will "do good," not the donor. The charity becomes "rich in good works," not the donor.

6. **Wrong resolution.** Even if the donor is promised a victory, that victory is never confirmed. There's no reporting of the gift's impact. There's no gratitude for either the gift or its effect. There's no confirmation of the donor's positive character. The story simply ends at the ask.

Following the scriptural story for major gift fundraising works. Leaving parts out does not.

PART II

BACKSTORY: IDENTITY MOTIVATES ACTION

(Message 1: You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this!)

Backstory in this passage: Identity motivates action

In our passage, Paul gives Timothy a message to deliver. That message starts with a description of the donor's character. It describes the donor's past and continuing identity:

- He is not conceited. He is not high-minded. He is not above or separated from the fellowship community. (This word is a present infinitive: an already in-progress continuing process).
- He has not set his hope on riches. Instead, he has set his hope on God. (This word is a perfect infinitive: the present result of a past action.)

In the original text, this is not an attack on rich Christians. It's not a call to stop being bad. Instead, it's a call to continue being good. (For a full explanation of the Greek text, see *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words*, chapter 3.)

The message begins by describing the donor's already-in-progress admirable values. It describes his positive life history. In story terms, this part of the passage is the backstory. The backstory establishes a character's identity. This comes from his life history, his values, and his people.

But a backstory is not just a random character profile. It must connect the main character's identity to the challenge. In

this story, the challenge will be to share wealth generously. The backstory shows why the donor will say “Yes!” to the challenge.

He will share. He will share [*koinōnikous*] with the fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. He will do so because he is not separated from the fellowship community. He is not high-minded. He is not above others. He is not conceited. These people are his people.

He will share wealth. He will do so because he has not set his hope on wealth. He knows it’s not reliable. Trying to grasp every coin won’t secure his future.

He will generously share wealth. He will do so because he has set his hope on God. God has been generous to him. Responding to God’s generosity with his own offers a better future.

The challenge to act will come. But it comes later. It comes after the backstory. First, we start with the donor’s identity. We start with his people, values, and life history. This identity will motivate him to act. It will motivate him to say “Yes!” to the challenge.

Paul’s many backstory arguments: Identity motivates action

A backstory shows how a person’s identity motivates action. It motivates accepting a challenge. This approach is not new. Paul uses a backstory argument in his challenges to Agrippa,² Felix,³ and the Areopagus.⁴

He uses it in his next letter to Timothy. Paul is going to charge Timothy to remain faithful. But he starts his appeal –

with Timothy's backstory. He writes,

“For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelled in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.” (2 Timothy 1:5).

Timothy's backstory is his past, current, and ongoing identity. It's formed by his people, values, and life history. This backstory is one of “sincere faith.” It compels him to accept Paul's challenge. Timothy's identity – his backstory – compels him to accept the challenge.

This is the same approach in our passage. It begins with the positive characteristics of the listeners' identity. This identity compels them to follow the instructions to be generous. This approach matches Paul's regular practice in persuading an audience. It matches the original words of scripture. And it matches what works in real-world practice.

The timeless appeal of backstory: Identity motivates action

We can even see this appeal to backstory in the most popular modern stories. Consider the most successful movies. They started the most popular franchises of their times: Star Wars, The Matrix, and The Hobbit. Notice the similarities:

- The wise, guiding sage: Obi-Wan, Morpheus, Gandalf
- Challenges the prospective hero: Luke Skywalker, Neo, Bilbo Baggins
- To leave behind his small, self-focused world: a Tatooine farm, a dreary corporate job, the shire
- And go on a costly and risky journey to impact the larger world: save Princess Leia, leave the matrix, join the expedition.

Each “call to adventure” challenge is similar. (Each also parallels the fundraiser’s “ask.”) The prospective hero is challenged. And what message motivates him to accept the challenge? It’s always the same. The prospective hero’s backstory – his people, values, or life history – compels him to say yes. It inspires accepting the challenge. His identity motivates action.

Backstory in Star Wars: Identity motivates action

In Star Wars, Obi-Wan will challenge Luke to go on an adventure:

- Leave his planet.
- Learn the ways of the force.
- Deliver a droid to save the rebellion.

Obi-wan starts his appeal – with Luke’s backstory.⁵ Luke’s father was a Jedi Knight. (The challenge connects to Luke’s people.) The rebellion fights against his father’s murderer. (The challenge connects to Luke’s life history.) It fights the dark side of the force. (The challenge connects to Luke’s values.)

Luke must accept the challenge because of who he is. He must accept because of who he will become. His identity – his backstory – compels him to accept the challenge.

Backstory in The Matrix: Identity motivates action

In The Matrix, Morpheus will challenge Neo to go on an adventure. This is the famous red pill / blue pill decision to leave the Matrix. Morpheus starts his appeal – with Neo’s

backstory. Neo's identity will compel him to act. Morpheus says,

“Let me tell you why you are here. You have come because you know something. What you know, you can't explain, but you feel it. You've felt it your whole life, felt that something is wrong with the world.... You are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. A prison for your mind.”⁶

Neo is compelled by his life experiences and identity. He must leave the Matrix because he is a prisoner. He must accept the challenge because of who he is. His identity – his backstory – compels him to accept the challenge.

Backstory in The Hobbit: Identity motivates action

In *The Hobbit*, Gandalf challenges Bilbo to go on an adventure. Bilbo resists. Gandalf then starts his appeal – with Bilbo's backstory.

“GANDALF: I remember a young Hobbit who was always running off in search of Elves in the woods. Who would stay out late, come home after dark ... trailing mud and twigs and fireflies. A young Hobbit who would have liked nothing better than to find out what was beyond the borders of the Shire.”⁷

Again, Bilbo resists. Again, Gandalf appeals to Bilbo's backstory.

“GANDALF: You are also a Took. Did you know that your great-great-great-great-uncle Bullroarer Took was so large, he could ride a real horse? ... In the Battle of Green Fields, he charged the Goblin ranks. He swung his club so hard, it knocked the Goblin king's head clean off.”

Bilbo will join the expedition. He'll fight against the Goblins. He'll do so just like his ancestor did. The challenge is personally meaningful. It's meaningful because of Bilbo's backstory. His identity – his backstory – compels him to accept the challenge.

Backstory: Identity motivates action

In each case, the idea is the same. The motivation to act comes from the main character's backstory. It comes from his identity. It comes from his people, his values, and his life story. This is a timeless motivation to accept a challenge. It works in story. It works in scripture. And it works in fundraising.

PART III

FUNDRAISING BACKSTORY STATEMENTS

(Message 1: You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this!)

Backstory in fundraising: Identity motivates action

The story concept is timeless. It's universal. The backstory establishes identity. This identity motivates action. These same story steps also work in fundraising.

What about the backstory in this passage? How might it translate to an actual fundraising conversation? It might start,

“You know, Bob, one of the things I appreciate about you is that although you have wealth, you aren't conceited about it. You aren't separating yourself above other people in the fellowship community. You have wealth, but you haven't set your hope in it. Instead, you've set your hope on God, who provides us with these things and wants us to enjoy them. You've accomplished so much good work with your giving already. This makes me think that you might really enjoy the impact you could accomplish in this new project. Your gift would strengthen this fellowship community by creating a ...”

In fundraising, this is an “ask.” (Or, more accurately, it's an offer.) But it also paraphrases scripture. It begins with the donor's backstory. It begins with his past and continuing identity. It's who he has been. It's who he is now. It's who he is in the process of continuing to be. It's an identity that leads him to be generous. His identity motivates his action.

Backstory sources: People, values, and life history

In fundraising, the backstory shows how the donor's identity motivates the gift. It shows the donor why,

“You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this.”

That's the key message. That's the conclusion. So, how do we help the donor reach that conclusion? We help by finishing this thought:

“You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this because ...”

This “because” will connect the gift to the donor's identity. It will connect to their people, values, or life history. For example, in our passage, this “because” is

- Because of their people
 - They are wealthy, but they are not high-minded. They don't separate themselves above the fellowship community. These people are their people.
 - Their people also share whatever God has richly supplied to them in exactly this same way. Together, they're all part of the mutually sharing fellowship community.
- Because of their values
 - They are wealthy, but they have not placed their hope in wealth. They don't need to hoard every coin “just in case.”
 - Instead, they have placed their hope in God. They want to use their wealth in a way that pleases Him.
 - Their values pay back good for good. God has “richly supplied” them “with all things.” They imitate God's generosity with their own.

- Because of their life history
 - Their past life history shows that these values have long been in place. (Setting their hope on God, not riches, is a perfect tense. It references the present result of a past action.)
 - Their life history reflects God's ongoing rich provision to them. This life history motivates their generous response.
 - Their ongoing life history shows that they are generous. ("To do good," "to be rich in good works," and "to be generous and ready to share" are all present infinitives. They reference already in-progress continuing processes.)

These connections describe the donor's backstory. They describe his charitable identity. They all lead to the same conclusion:

"You're the kind of person who makes gifts like this."

The science of backstory in wealth sharing

In this passage, the donor's people, values, and life history motivate their wealth sharing. This isn't just ancient history. It's also modern science.

Experimental research in giving mostly tests small gifts. But there is a way to test wealth sharing. We can test it with experiments in estate giving. A gift in a will is not a gift from disposable income. It's a gift from wealth holdings. It's wealth sharing.

In one experiment, I explored this decision process.⁸ People made decisions about adding different charities to their estate plans. They were asked about their church, various

Christian organizations, and other national charities. But this experiment was different. People made these choices while in an fMRI brain scanner.

What predicted these decisions to share wealth? Visualized autobiography. We could see it in the brain scanner. When people review their life story or recall autobiographical events, it triggers joint activation in two brain regions. This same joint activation also predicted willingness to make the charitable estate gift.

If a charity triggered a connection with the donor's life story – the donors wanted to give. Otherwise, they didn't want to give. Autobiographical visualization predicted willingness to share wealth. The donor's backstory motivated their wealth sharing.

Another study took a different approach. It interviewed charitable bequest donors. It explored why they had included gifts to their particular charities. The answer?

“When discussing which charities they had chosen to remember, there was a clear link with the life narratives of many respondents.”⁹

Again, the donor's backstory motivated their wealth sharing.

This isn't just a matter of scientific curiosity. It's also practically useful. In another study, I tested how best to describe charitable estate giving.¹⁰ I tested 23 different phrases with nearly 10,000 participants.

The phrase that created the most willingness to give was this:

“Make a gift to charity in your will to support causes that have been important in your life.”

This worked dramatically better than simply,

“Make a gift to charity in your will.”¹¹

Referencing the donor’s backstory motivated their wealth sharing.

This same result arose for reminders of the donor’s people connections. In another experiment, I again asked about making bequest gifts to various charities. Then, I did something different. I asked about any family members’ connections to the cause.¹² (The idea was to elicit the donor’s people connections to the cause.) This worked. Coupling this reminder with a tribute bequest option dramatically increased charitable bequest intentions.

People who weren’t initially interested in giving changed their minds. Reminding people of their life story connections – this time through their people connections – worked. Again, the donor’s backstory motivated their wealth sharing.

These experimental results are not just scientifically interesting. They’re practically useful. We can show donors how their backstory connects with a wealth-sharing opportunity. We can ask questions that elicit these connections from the donor.

Next, we’ll look at some practical examples from real-world fundraising. These connect giving to the donor’s people, values, and life history. They show how the donor’s backstory motivates their gift.

Fundraising backstory: “You’re the kind of person who makes gifts like this!”

This approach is not just ancient history. It’s not just theoretical or scientific. It’s also what the best major gift

fundraisers actually do.

Let's start simple. How do we ask for a gift? The expert on this is Marci Heim. She trains fundraisers across the country on "Making the Artful Ask." How does she begin? She begins with the donor's backstory.

Her ask is simple. It uses three sentences. These are

1. "You have (compliment on connection, service, past giving, status in the community)
2. You understand (special connection to or appreciation of the impact of the gift you are asking for)
3. Would you consider a gift of \$___ for/to (special use)?"¹³

What might this sound like in the real world? It might sound like this:

1. "You have been well known in this community as an advocate for our youth summer camps."
 2. "You understand how camp scholarships change the lives of young people, giving them a chance to learn and grow just as you did in your youth."
 3. "Would you consider a gift of \$50,000 to create the Smith Family Permanent Endowed Scholarship Fund to give that opportunity to future generations of campers?"
-
1. "You have always had such a heart for supporting the arts in our community."
 2. "You understand how this new exhibition could make a real impact for other art lovers like you and our whole city."
 3. "Would you consider a gift of \$50,000 as our lead campaign donor to make this happen?"

1. “You have been such a loyal alumnus of this department since you graduated years ago.”
 2. “You understand how important scholarships are in helping others like you become proud alums of the future.”
 3. “Would you consider a gift of \$100,000 to fund a permanent named scholarship giving students the chance for an education?”
-
1. “You have changed so many lives through your support of our job training programs, just as your mother liked to say, ‘Giving people a hand up, not a handout.’”
 2. “You understand how this new technology center could provide real opportunities for young people who start out with nothing but a willingness to work hard, just like you did.”
 3. “Would you consider a gift of \$100,000 as one of our leadership-level donors to help transform our community in this way?”
-
1. “You have been so dedicated to improving the lives of patients at this hospital going back even before your own father received care here.”
 2. “You understand how this new ‘Campaign against Cancer’ can change the lives of so many right here in our community.”
 3. “Would you consider a gift of \$100,000 to help fund next year’s screening clinics?”

These are fundraising asks. But they don’t start with the request. They start with the donor’s backstory. First, they

connect this backstory to the cause. This shows why,

“You’re the kind of person who makes gifts like this!”

Next, they connect this identity with the impact of the donor’s gift. Notice that the request is not, “Can I have some money, please?” The request is for the donor to do something (that happens to cost money).

What they will do is good. Beyond this, the good work is personally meaningful. It connects with the donor’s backstory. It connects with the donor’s identity. This identity connection motivates them to act. It shows why,

“You’re the kind of person who makes gifts like this!”

The effective “ask” delivers a specific message. It uses a specific sequence. The message is not new. The sequence is not new. It matches effective storytelling. It matches ancient scripture. It’s ancient, but it still works.

Fundraising backstory: “You’re the kind of person who has made gifts like this!”

The donor is a generous person. This is also part of their backstory. This identity is not just something they aspire to be one day. It’s an “already in-progress continuing process.”

Our passage describes the donor’s generosity in this way. “To do good” is a present infinitive. In Greek, the present infinitive references an “already in-progress continuing process.” “To be rich in good works” is also a present infinitive. So is “to be generous.” Each is an appeal to give. But each is framed as engaging in “an already in-progress continuing process.”

This isn't a request to start being generous. It's a request to continue being generous. It's not a request to start doing good. It's a request to continue doing good. In real-world, practical fundraising, this framing works.

One experiment tested different headlines across six fundraising mailings to over 50,000 people.¹⁴ The top-performing headline to generate gifts was this:

“CAMPAIGN DONOR FOR ____ YEARS

Your most generous gift was \$ ____ . Thank you.”

The most successful ask began with the donor's charitable backstory. It reminded the donor of their most generous gift. It didn't ask them to start giving big. It asked them to continue giving big. It showed,

“You're the kind of person who makes large gifts.”

Referencing large past gifts also works in other experiments. Describing past gifts as a large total amount rather than small monthly amounts increases giving.¹⁵ To understand this result, compare these two:

“Thank you so much for your generosity to this cause! You've given \$50 per month for the last three years. [Alternate: You've given \$1,800 over the last three years.] Would you consider a gift of \$1,000 to fund this project?”

The first description says,

“You're the kind of person who makes \$50 gifts.”

This framing does not match the request. It implies,

“A \$50 donor is not the kind of person who makes \$1,000 gifts.”

The alternate description instead says,

“You’re the kind of person who has given \$1,800.”

It implies,

“A \$1,800 donor is the kind of person who makes \$1,000 gifts.”

This second framing matches the life history (backstory) to the request. That match makes it work better.

Reaching the conclusion

These examples all do the same thing. They show how the donor’s giving springs from their backstory. Their “already in-progress continuing” values are generous. Their “already in-progress continuing” behavior is generous. The conclusion is obvious:

“You are the kind of person who makes gifts like this.”

¹ In sequence, these words in the passage are rich, riches, richly, rich, generous (a newly constructed word that can reference being a good sharer of wealth or abundance), storing up treasure, and foundation. See “Let’s talk about wealth!” Chapter 4 in *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.

² Acts 26:2-3 “Regarding all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that I am about to make my defense before you today, especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.”

³ Acts 24:10b “Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense,”

⁴ Acts 17:22 “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects.’”

⁵ This “call to adventure” scene begins with Luke’s family.

LUKE: How did my father die?

OBI-WAN: A young Jedi named Darth Vader, who was a pupil of mine until he turned to evil, helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights. He betrayed and murdered your father. Now the Jedi are all but extinct.

[The life history continues by including values.]

OBI-WAN: Vader was seduced by the dark side of the Force.

LUKE: The Force?

OBI-WAN: Well, the Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It’s an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.

[Luke then hears the clear, simple challenge. It comes first from Leia.]

LEIA: I have placed information vital to the survival of the Rebellion into the memory systems of this R2 unit ... You must see this droid safely delivered to him on Alderaan. This is our most desperate hour. Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi, you’re my only hope.

[And then from Obi-Wan,]

OBI-WAN: You must learn the ways of the Force if you’re to come with me to Alderaan.

LUKE: Alderaan? I’m not going to Alderaan. I’ve got to go home. It’s late, I’m in for it as it is.

OBI-WAN: I need your help, Luke. She needs your help.

[Lucas, G. (January 15, 1976) *STAR WARS Episode IV A NEW HOPE from the JOURNAL OF THE WHILLS*, Revised Fourth Draft, <https://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Star-Wars-A-New-Hope.html>]

⁶ Larry Wachowski, L. & Wachowski, A. (1997). *The Matrix screenplay*. [Screenplay]. Warner Brothers Entertainment.

⁷ Walsh, F., Boyens, P., Jackson, P., & del Toro, G. (2012). *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey – unofficial transcript by (based on the novel The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien)*.

https://pjhobbitfilms.fandom.com/wiki/The_Hobbit:_An_Unexpected_Journey/Transcript

⁸ James III, R. N., & O'Boyle, M. W. (2014). Charitable estate planning as visualized autobiography: An fMRI study of its neural correlates. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2), 355-373.

⁹ Routley, C. J. (2011). *Leaving a charitable legacy: Social influence, the self and symbolic immortality* (Doctoral dissertation). University of the West of England. p. 220.

¹⁰ James, R. N., III. (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27, 998-1011.

¹¹ Similarly, "Many people like to leave a gift to charity in their will because they want to continue to support causes that are important in their lives" worked much better than "Many people like to leave a gift to charity in their will because they want to continue to support their favorite charities." (Emphasis added.) [James, R. N., III. (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27, 998-1011.]

¹² James III, R. N. (2015). The family tribute in charitable bequest giving: An experimental test of the effect of reminders on giving intentions. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 26(1), 73-89.

¹³ <http://marcyheim.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2017-Heim-Worksheet-Making-an-Artful-Ask.pdf>

¹⁴ Khan, H. & Hardy, E. (2019). *Using behavioural insights to encourage charitable donations among repeat donors*. Privy Council Office: Impact Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ih-ci/documents/pdfs/HS-eng.pdf>

¹⁵ Hmurovic, J., & Lamberton, C. (2017). Does repeating prompt retreating? How the structure of initial charitable contributions impacts the magnitude of subsequent support. *North American - Advances in Consumer Research*, 45, 661-662, <http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1023996/volumes/v45/NA-45>

Chapter 4

Message 2: Let's talk about wealth!

- *Biblical fundraising is about wealth conversations.*
- *Ordinary fundraising stays stuck in the realm of disposable income decisions.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are **rich** in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of **riches**, but on God, who **richly** supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be **rich** in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the **treasure** of a good **foundation** for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

WEALTH IS DIFFERENT

That's not what this is

What is fundraising? Ask a normal person, and they'll probably say,

"Fundraising? That's asking people to give away money."

But that's not what this passage describes. Consider the differences.

This passage is not just about money. It's about wealth. Money and wealth are different. Wealth can be held as money, but it rarely is. Wealth is held as appreciated assets. Money is usually a form of income, not wealth. Income is not wealth.

This passage is not about just giving money. It's about enjoying wealth. How? By putting it to work. By using it to do good. By using it to be rich in beautiful, good works. By being a fellowship-community sharer.

This passage is not about giving money away. It's about sharing wealth together. Giving and sharing are different. Sharing is giving "with" or "among" a community. This passage describes wealth sharing. It's sharing with a mutually reciprocal fellowship community.

This passage is not about just giving up wealth. It's about accumulating more kinds of wealth. It's about becoming wealthy in even more ways. It's about becoming rich in beautiful, inspirational, visible good works. It's about storing up a treasure. It's a treasure for the donors. It's a treasure for their future.

This passage is not about just "asking" for money. It's about coming alongside to deliver an authorized message about wealth. It's instructing about wealth. It's advising about lifetime wealth management.

This ministry is not just "asking people to give away money." It's not about asking; it's about instructing and advising. It's not about giving away; it's about sharing together. It's not about money; it's about wealth.

Wealth is not income

Wealth permeates this passage. This is a ministry to wealth holders. It's a ministry about wealth management. It's about burying wealth, enjoying wealth, putting wealth to work, and diversifying wealth. It's a ministry about wealth. Understanding this ministry starts by understanding a little bit about wealth.

At a conference once, I was talking with a fundraiser about my upcoming session. I would be talking about the importance of shifting donors from gifts of income to gifts of wealth. She looked puzzled. She hesitated. Finally, she asked,

“Aren’t those the same thing?”

Her confusion is common. So, before we go any further, let’s review the basics.

Wealth and income are different. A paycheck is income. An accumulated pile of valuable assets is wealth.

A person can have a very high income and no wealth. Celebrities and famous athletes often have high incomes. And they often go broke.¹ No matter how much a person’s income is, they can always spend more.

A high-income story

In law school, I worked as a summer associate for a large corporate law firm. The firm took up the top floors of the newest downtown high rise. I probably wasn’t impressing anyone at the firm driving my 10-year-old Ford Escort station wagon. But, hey, that’s the life of a student who wants to graduate without debt!

One day at lunch, I mentioned to another law student, “It’s weird. Some of these guys make a lot. But many still live from paycheck to paycheck.”

He nodded.

I said, “But I guess at some point that goes away. If you were making a million dollars a year, that wouldn’t be a problem!”

And then my friend said something interesting. He said, “That’s not true.”

I looked a little skeptical.

He explained, “Last summer, I clerked in Manhattan.” (He was going to Harvard Law School and had worked in a top New York law firm.) He went on, “Several partners made a million a year. And they were just getting by – trying to make it to the next paycheck.” (This was 1992, so triple that paycheck for today’s dollars.)

“No way,” I said. “There is no way you can be making a million dollars a year and be just getting by.”

This sounded like complete nonsense. Understand, my father was a firefighter. My mother was a librarian and English teacher. There were no million-dollar paychecks in our house!

“Think about it,” he said. “You make a million. So, you’re paying the top federal tax rate. You’re also paying the top New York state tax rate – one of the highest in the country. And you’re working in New York City, which adds another tax.

“Put it all together, and that’s 55% in taxes. So, your \$1 million just became \$450K. You own a house where the other partners live. That’s at least \$3 million. Your payments are \$300K. So, now you’re down to 150K, and you don’t even have a car, food, or clothes. And your family? Hey, they know you make a million a year. How do you think they’re going to spend?”

I started doing the math.

He continued, “I know guys there making a million a year who hate their jobs. They come in every day wishing they

could do something else. But they need the paycheck. They're just trying to make it through the month. Hopefully, they get to retire one day – but that's about it.”

What's the point? Having a high income is not the same as having an abundance. Having a high income is different from having wealth. Wealth is not income.

A low-income story

A person can have a very high income and no wealth. The reverse is also true. A person can have very high wealth with little income. This is actually common.

Consider the wealthy entrepreneur. She owns a business. It's profitable. But whenever she takes the profit out as income, it's taxed. Twice. So, instead, she reinvests profits inside the company. It helps the company grow even more. This makes her even wealthier. But the profit creates no income for her.

Or consider the wealthy farmer. He might make a profit from crops or livestock. But then he invests it back in equipment and improvements. His property increases in value. But that's not income until he sells it. His wealth increases, but his net income stays low.

Or consider the wealthy retiree. To live somewhere nice, other people must earn income. They have to pay a mortgage or rent. Not him. He paid off his mortgage years ago. He lives rent-free and mortgage-free because of his housing wealth. He gets the same housing, but without reporting any income.

He may also have financial investments earning income. But those are in retirement accounts. They don't count as

income until he takes the money out. He has high wealth and low income.

This is not just a matter of stories. It's also a matter of statistics. Wealthy philanthropists usually can't use charitable tax deductions. Why not? Because they don't report enough income. Giving even a modest share of wealth far exceeds their income. David Joulfaian from the US Department of the Treasury reports,

“75 percent of the contributions by the very rich are never deducted.”²

Wealth is assets not money

People often use wealth and money as synonyms. But they're not the same. Money can be a form of wealth. But it rarely is. Wealth is not held as money. It's not held in cash, checking accounts, money market accounts, and the like.

In the US, less than 3% of household financial wealth is held in these forms.³ Including all wealth, such as real estate, makes it an even smaller share. Wealth is held in other forms. It's held as business interests, securities, real estate, bonds, life insurance, and retirement accounts.

Wealth rarely comes directly from a paycheck. Instead, wealth comes from holding assets that go up in value. That value might go up through personal effort. This is what business owners do. Or it might come from accepting risk and buying the right asset. This is what investors do. Borrowing to buy even more of the appreciating asset increases potential results.

Bill Gates started a software company. He then used personal effort to grow it.⁴ Warren Buffet invented a new way

to borrow money to buy stocks.⁵ Then, he picked the right stocks.

Wealth comes from holding assets that go up in value. This is also true for middle-class people. People borrow money to buy an appreciating asset. They use a mortgage to buy a house. Often, they apply personal effort to maintain and increase the value of that asset. Most middle-class wealth is held in that asset. It's held as housing.

Whether it's Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, or your neighbor, the reality is the same. Wealth is not money. Wealth is not held as money. Wealth is held as noncash assets.

This matters because this ministry is about wealth and wealth sharing. Wealth is different. Wealth is different from money. Wealth is different from income. This ministry is not about asking for money. It's not about asking for income. Those things are fine, but they're not this ministry.

PART II

WEALTH SHARING IS DIFFERENT

(Message 2: Let's talk about wealth!)

Wealth sharing addresses a different spiritual issue

Paul outlines a ministry to the rich. This is a ministry to a specific people group. They have specific tendencies. They face specific problems. They have specific needs.

The stewardship issue facing wealth holders is different. They are the accumulators. They like to hold wealth. That's why they became, or stayed, wealthy in the first place. That's why they didn't spend it.

We don't need to counsel them about not bingeing with their wealth. That's not their temptation. They aren't tempted to become the bingeing prodigal son who

“squandered his estate in wild living.” (Luke 15:13b).

They aren't tempted to become the bingeing bad steward who

“begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards,” (Matthew 24:48b ESV).

Their temptation is different. It's not to be the bingeing bad steward. Their temptation is to be the burying bad steward.

God may richly provide them with wealth. Maybe it's a huge chunk of gold. Let's say 125 lbs., or 59 kg, of it. In ancient measurements, this is called a “talent.” It's worth about \$3-4

million today. That's a wonderful blessing! But it can lead to a tragedy.

The tragedy comes from what happens next. They're afraid. So, they take that chunk of gold and just bury it in the ground. They don't do anything with it. In the Parable of the Talents, the burying bad steward explained,

“And I was afraid, so I went away and hid your talent in the ground.” (Matthew 25:25a).

Or maybe God gives them money. But they're afraid. So, they take that money and hide it away in a handkerchief. In the Parable of the Minas, the burying bad steward explained,

“here is your mina, which I kept tucked away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid” (Luke 19:20b-21a).

What motivates these burying bad stewards? Why would they do this? When people bury what they never use, it's always for the same reason. They do so because,

“I was afraid.” (Matthew 25:25b; Luke 19:21b).

They don't put their trust in God. They put their trust in hidden wealth. (1 Timothy 6:17).⁶

This is a serious spiritual issue. In Jesus's teaching, it has seriously bad consequences. The burying servant is called “worthless.” (Luke 19:22; Matthew 25:26). He is called “evil,” “wicked,” and “lazy.” (Matthew 25:26).⁷ Everything he has is taken from him. (Luke 19:24). He is thrown

“into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:30).

This is a serious spiritual tragedy. Spiritual outcomes don't get more tragic than this.

Income sharing won't help

So, how can we address this important spiritual issue? Suppose a person's heart is attached to their buried wealth. They've been richly blessed by God. Their response is to bury it. Their plan is to die with it. That's their heart issue.

Now suppose we convince them to give 10% of their income. That's wonderful. And how does that affect their buried wealth? It doesn't. It doesn't touch the buried wealth.

Suppose we do even more. We convince them to give 20% of their income. Or, dare I say it, even 50% of their income! That too is wonderful. And how does that affect their buried wealth? It doesn't. Income sharing doesn't touch the buried wealth. At most, it merely slows the rate of adding even more to their buried wealth.

Income sharing doesn't help. It also doesn't address the heart issue. The heart issue is about wealth – not income. Jesus said,

“For where your treasure [*thēsauros*] is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:34)

He wasn't talking about income. He was talking about wealth. *Thēsauros* references a “storehouse.” It's

“the place in which goods and precious things are collected and laid up.”⁸

It's also “the things laid up in a treasury” or “collected treasures.”

Jesus wasn't talking about income. And he wasn't talking about income sharing. He hadn't just said,

“Share your income and give to charity.”

Instead, he had said,

“Sell your possessions and give to charity” (Luke 12:33).

This is a different conversation. It’s a different spiritual issue. It’s about the accumulation. It’s about assets. It’s about wealth. Income-sharing conversations won’t help with this.

The ministry to the rich

1 Timothy 6:17-19 describes a ministry to the rich. We talk about wealth because that addresses the spiritual needs of this group. We talk about wealth because we care about them.

We actually want them to enjoy their wealth. That’s why God gave it to them in the first place. Paul points them to,

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

They enjoy it by using it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

That’s a positive message!

But there’s another side. If we fail to persuade them, we know what they’ll do. They’re the accumulators. They’ll bury it. And they’ll die with it.

We’ve read the ending of that story. We know what they’ll be facing. We don’t want that for them. So, we talk about wealth.

Income sharing is fine. But it’s not the main stewardship issue for this group. The stewardship issue for this group is

different. The key question is different. The key question is

“What are you going to do with your disappearing wealth?”

This is a different question because this is a different group. They need a special message. They need a special ministry. They need precisely that ministry directed in scripture. Sadly, this message and this ministry are often missing.

The missing ministry

This ministry is important. It's important for the wealth holders. It's important for the ministries they could fund. And in modern churches, it's all missing. This message is missing. These conversations are missing. This ministry to the rich is missing.

Ministers are willing to have income-sharing conversations. They'll preach income-sharing messages. But they avoid wealth conversations. They avoid talking to the wealthy about their wealth plans.

Focusing only on income sharing can miss the point spiritually. It can also miss the point statistically. Only 3.7% of Americans give more than 10% of their income to religious organizations.⁹ It's a small group. But, at least these few dedicated people are really generous, right? Not necessarily.

About half of these religious tithers fall into a category with low income but high wealth. They have less than half of the income of a typical household, but they have three times the wealth. Their wealth-to-income ratio is 6X that of normal households. As a share of income, they appear generous. As a share of wealth, they don't.

For this group, income-sharing messages are easy. Income-sharing messages don't touch the wealth. Also, these messages rarely lead to large gifts. The data reflect this, too. Churches are good at getting small gifts. They're bad at getting large ones.¹⁰

Statistically, churches are bad at getting gifts of wealth. They don't talk about wealth. They don't talk about wealth planning. They don't talk about wealth sharing. They don't want to talk about it. Often, they don't even want to hear about it.

In the US, there are professional associations focused on gifts of wealth. These are gifts like noncash assets, real estate, business interests, estate gifts, endowments, trusts, and so forth.¹¹ I speak at many gatherings of such groups across the country. These meetings have fundraisers from every kind of charitable organization.

Except one. There are no local churches. There are no stewardship ministers. There are no executive pastors. There are no local church employees. In the churches, this fundraising is missing. This ministry is missing. This isn't just a fiscal tragedy. It's also a spiritual one.

Wealth sharing matters in fundraising

This focus on wealth matters. Wealth matters in ministry. Wealth also matters in fundraising. It mattered 2,000 years ago. It still matters today. The data prove it.

A few years ago, the IRS changed its data-sharing policies for IRS Form 990. You probably aren't excited by that statement. I understand. But for me, it was very exciting.

US nonprofits file this form each year. It reports their finances, including contributions. These are public records. Researchers could request these forms one at a time but couldn't get the whole database.

Then, that changed. The IRS started sharing the whole database. This had six years of data from over a million tax returns. It showed whose contributions were growing and whose weren't. What predicted this difference? Statistical analysis gave some answers.

One difference was massive. Some charities' contributions came entirely from gifts of cash. Others also included gifts of assets, like securities and real estate.

Over 5 years, contributions growth averaged 11% total for those receiving only cash gifts. That was the same as total inflation. On average, cash-only charities were just trading water.

Those receiving gifts from securities (at both the beginning and end) were different. On average, their total 5-year growth wasn't 11%. It was 66%. This was a six-fold difference in long-term contributions growth.¹²

This one piece of information told a lot. Suppose a charity was only receiving gifts of cash. If they stayed on that path, they wouldn't grow. On average, they would only keep up with inflation.

Suppose a charity also received gifts of noncash assets, like securities or real estate. If they stayed on that path, they would grow tremendously. On average, their growth would be 6X that of the cash-only charities.

Charities receiving gifts of assets are likely talking about gifts of assets. They are talking about gifts of wealth. Charities receiving no gifts of assets are likely not talking about gifts of assets. They aren't talking about gifts of wealth.

Wealth-sharing examples and wealth-sharing conversations create a different fundraising trajectory. An organization that talks about gifts of houses, land, or business interests is on a different path.

How can we get there? Giving examples of individual named donors who make gifts of assets works. (See Acts 4:37). Giving examples of groups of donors who make gifts of assets works, too. (See Acts 2:45, 4:34). Having conversations about wealth also works. (See 1 Timothy 6:17-19). These produce fundamentally different fundraising results. An analysis of a million nonprofit tax returns shows it to be true.

Wealth sharing matters because it's all relative

A six-fold difference in fundraising growth is a big deal. It's an even bigger deal because this isn't just one story. It's not just what happened in one place. It happened in every sector across the universe of US nonprofits.¹³

What explains this massive difference? Two ideas from behavioral economics give some insight: relative comparisons and mental accounting.

First, people tend to make decisions based on relative comparisons. What is our natural comparison point if we make a gift of cash? It's other things we use cash for. It's what we just spent at Starbucks or 7-Eleven.

A cash decision is a pocket change decision. We compare it with other pocket change decisions. This

comparison point makes a large gift seem outlandish. It doesn't fit with the comparison point.

Suppose we instead make a gift of stocks. It comes from our stock portfolio. What's the natural comparison point? It's our stock holdings. As a share of that wealth, a large gift may seem very small. It seems appropriate.

Shifting from a gift of cash to a gift of assets changes the reference point. This makes a difference. Sometimes, the difference can be immediate. One fundraiser shares this story:¹⁴

"I had a donor on the phone. He said, 'I'm going to send you a check for \$2,000.'

I said, 'Jim, is there any chance you have stock that is worth \$2,000?'

He said, 'Yes, absolutely. But I don't want to sell that stock.'

I said, 'Take the cash. Go buy that exact same stock. Then, send us the old shares worth \$2,000. Now you have stepped-up basis. That highly appreciated stock now starts at zero for capital gains tax purposes. And you get a charitable deduction as well.'

He asked, 'I can do that?'

I said, 'Yeah.'

The next day, we received a stock gift ... of \$10,000 from the donor."

The fundraiser didn't ask for a gift of a different amount. The fundraiser asked for a gift of a different type. As a result, the gift size increased 5X. The gift changed from cash to assets. It changed from disposable income sharing to wealth sharing.

Wealth sharing matters because categories matter

Another concept from modern behavioral economics is called “mental accounting.” The idea is this. To an economist, all money is the same. Money is money. But that’s not how people behave. Instead, they put different labels on money. Then, they treat that money differently based on those labels.

For example, people treat money from earned income one way. They treat money from an unearned windfall differently. This also matters for fundraising. People are less generous with regular earned income.¹⁵ They’re more generous with unearned windfalls.¹⁶

For most donors, giving is exclusively a disposable income decision. Gifts come from regular earned income. They’re limited to that category. Those gifts may be consistent, but they’ll never be big. They’re in the wrong category for that. Regular earned income is not the big category. Wealth is the big category. Big gifts are gifts of wealth.

That simple insight is key. Shifting donors from a disposable income gift to a gift of wealth is powerful. It’s psychologically powerful. Even if it’s the same size, a gift of assets – like stocks – differs from a gift of cash. It’s a different type of gift. Getting that new type of gift changes things. It mentally transforms the wealth category. It makes their wealth “donation relevant.”

We also see this behavior in another charitable context. For most people, the first time they will ever commit to a gift from their wealth is in their estate plan. A gift in a will is not a gift from disposable income. It is a gift from accumulated wealth.

Committing to this gift of wealth changes things. It makes the wealth category “donation relevant.” That change in mental accounting changes giving behavior.

A national study showed this.¹⁷ It compared people’s giving before and after they made a charitable estate plan. Afterward, their annual giving increased by 77%. These were the same people before and after. But their behavior changed. This giving increase was sustained 2 years, 4 years, 6 years, and even 8 years later. The change was permanent.

The impact on very large gifts was even more dramatic. The probability of gifts over \$10,000 doubled after their new estate planning. Committing to a gift from wealth transformed their giving behavior.

Wealth sharing matters because families share things

Gifts of disposable income are given in cash. Gifts of wealth are often given as assets like stocks and real estate. They are given as houses, land, business interests, collectibles, or estate shares. These gifts are different. They’re things, not money. This can make a difference psychologically.

Families share things. So do friends. A holiday gathering often involves sharing food, housing, and even clothing. People bring gifts for each other.

What don’t they do? They don’t pass around money. Money is different. It’s transactional. It’s for the market, not the family and friends.

Suppose a new person moves to the neighborhood. How might we welcome them? We might stop by with some food or a gift basket. We might hand it to them and say,

“Welcome to the neighborhood!”

What would we not do? We wouldn't stop by and hand them some money. That would be weird – maybe even offensive.

In economics, both actions seem the same. If anything, handing them cash is better. They can use it to buy exactly what they want. But that's not how social relationships work. Gifts of things are pro-social. They signal social closeness. Money is transactional. It signals social distance.

Experimental research shows this. In experiments, reminding people of money makes them more independent and competitive.¹⁸ It makes them less helpful.¹⁹ It makes them less compassionate.²⁰ It even reduces donations.²¹

Money is anti-social. But gifts of objects are pro-social.²² Giving items, rather than their cash equivalent, is seen as more generous, kind, helpful, and charitable.²³ These gifts are more social. They're more friendly.

Wealth-sharing conversations are often conversations about things. They're conversations about houses, land, business interests, or valuable personal property. These conversations may be more complicated. But they're also more social. They're conversations about things, not just money. This more social setting encourages sharing.

In 1 Timothy, the church is to act as a family. Wealth sharing is, in many ways, family sharing. Families often pass massive economic value through generations. But they do it in a specific way. They rarely do it by handing out cash. They do it by sharing things.

Family businesses often stay within the family. They're given to family members. Family land is often treated the same. It's given to family members. Family heirlooms aren't

sold for cash. They're handed down. They're given to family members. Transfers to family members are typically transfers of things – not cash.

The philanthropy of 1 Timothy 6:17-19 is this same type of transfer. It's wealth sharing – not just giving cash. It's an intensely social philanthropy. It's the philanthropy of a family.

Wealth sharing looks different

This ministry encourages wealth sharing. Wealth sharing is a different mental action than normal giving. It comes from a different mental category.

Often, wealth sharing is also a different physical action than normal giving. It looks different. It uses different instruments. It often involves sharing noncash assets like houses, land, and business interests.

This is different from simply asking for money. It often requires more work. Just asking for money isn't complicated. It doesn't require understanding wealth. It doesn't require familiarity with assets, asset transfers, wealth management, or estate planning. Wealth conversations sometimes do.

Encouraging wealth sharing can be harder. Wealth conversations can be more intimidating. The topics can be more intimidating. Even the people can be more intimidating.

Most asset giving comes from the top 1%.²⁴ Most estate giving comes from the top 0.1%.²⁵ If we focus on wealth sharing, we will be working with wealth holders.

This is not about just asking for money. It's about having wealth conversations with wealth holders. That's different. It's often more work. But it's powerful.

Wealth matters

Paul directs Timothy to a specific ministry. It's a ministry about wealth. This is not just about fundraising. It's about wealth sharing. Wealth sharing is different. Wealth sharing is different because wealth is different. It's a different money category. It's a different money psychology.

Asking for gifts from those who are not wealth holders is fine. Asking for gifts from income is fine. Those can be important tasks. But that's not this ministry.

This ministry is about wealth. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul makes it obvious. He references accumulated wealth once. Then, twice. Then, three times. Then, four times. Then, five times. Then, six times. Then, seven times and maybe more, all in just one sentence.²⁶

From ancient scripture, we can see that it is commanded. It's a necessary focus. It's a necessary ministry. From modern research, we can see that it works.

Focusing on wealth sharing transforms fundraising. It transforms a person's current and future giving. It transforms a charity's current and future contributions. The ancient words are true. They work. They worked 2,000 years ago. They still work today.

PART III

THE PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE WEALTH CONVERSATION

(Message 2: Let's talk about wealth!)

The past-present-future scriptural pattern

In this passage, Paul talks about the donor's wealth. He talks about its past, present, and future.

He talks about its past. What's its origin? It's been richly provided by God.

“God, who richly supplies us with all things” (1 Timothy 6:17c).

He talks about its present. Right now is the opportune moment. Those who are rich are rich

“at this opportune moment [*en to nyn kairō*]” (1 Timothy 6:17b Codex Sinaiticus)

Right now, they can use it for enjoyment. They can enjoy it by using it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

He talks about its future. The opportune moment is now. But this opportunity will disappear. Their wealth is uncertain. It's disappearing. He points to

“the uncertainty [*adēlotēti*] of riches” (1 Timothy 6:17c).

The near-term future of their wealth holding is uncertain. The long-term future is disappearance. He explains,

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.” (1 Timothy 6:7).

They can’t take it with them when they die. But they can choose a different future. Wealth holders can convert their wealth into a lasting treasure. They can enjoy it in a lasting way. They can enjoy it by

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

Paul covers the past, present, and future story of the rich Christian’s wealth. That’s great theology. But let’s get practical. How can we talk to rich Christians about their wealth?

We can do it the same way. We can talk about the past, present, and future of their wealth.

How, exactly, do we do this?

We want to have wealth conversations. Beyond this, we want to have wealth conversations with urgency. Specifically, we want the rich Christian to feel that

“Now is the time to decide what to do with my temporary wealth.”

So, how do we get there? How do we make this happen? Next, we’ll look at some practical approaches. These approaches are different, but they share an underlying idea. That idea is to bring the future forward. It’s to force the rich person to choose the ending of their wealth story. It uses future reality to trigger immediate action. It moves “maybe someday” to “now is the time.”

We see this same idea in 1 Timothy 6. Paul interrupts the ordinary world of habitual wealth accumulation. He points to the future. He shows how that ordinary world is disappearing.

The rich Christians' wealth holding will end. But they have a brief window of opportunity. They have a chance to choose. But that opportunity is temporary. They will eventually lose it all. But right now they can convert it into something permanent.

Paul brings the future forward. He triggers action with the end in mind. He pushes the rich Christian to focus on the end of their wealth holding story. He pushes them to act today in light of that future. We can do the same.

Your past-present-future asset story

This is a ministry about wealth. It's a ministry about wealth holders, wealth management, wealth enjoyment, wealth usage, wealth impact, and wealth diversification. If we want a ministry about wealth, we have to have wealth conversations.

Wealth is not held in cash. It's held in assets. It's held in assets like houses, land, and business interests. Assets have stories. We can elicit those asset stories. We can learn about an asset's past, present, and future story.

This can start with simple questions. We can ask about the origin story of the assets. For example,²⁷

- “What’s the story of your business? How did you get started?”
- “Are you a collector (art, stamps, coins, etc.)?” “What is the story? How did you get started?”

- “Do you invest in Real Estate?” “How did you get started?”
- “Where do you vacation?” “Do you own a home there?”
- “How has the market been treating you?” “What’s the best investment you ever made? Tell me that story.”

These can open a conversation. It’s a conversation about assets. It’s a conversation about wealth and wealth management. It starts with the asset’s origin story.

But suppose we don’t know enough to even ask about their assets or their wealth. How else can we start a wealth conversation? We can ask about their giving source. For example, we might ask,

- “You’ve done so much for [this charity]. What allows you to be so generous?”
- “How were you able to make this wonderful gift?”²⁸
- “What makes it possible for you to make this generous cash gift? Have you ever given something other than cash to a charitable organization?”²⁹

The idea is to learn about their wealth.³⁰ It’s to learn about their wealth origin story.

The origin story of wealth or an asset is a great place to start. But it’s not enough. The asset story needs to progress. We need to get to the future. A natural way to do this is to move from past to present to future. Questions about the present might sound like this:

- “Do you face any challenges in managing it today?”
- “What are you most excited about at the current time?”
- “Are the current political or market conditions affecting your management of it?”

The future asset punchline

These questions have a point. The point of the past-present-future sequence is to get to the future. This is the fundraising punchline.

Paul focuses on the future of the donors' assets. He puts it at the center of his message. He begins his wealth discussion with it:

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.” (1 Timothy 6:7).

He continues referencing their assets' future:

“nor to put their hope in wealth, which is uncertain/disappearing [*adēlotēti*]” (1 Timothy 6:17b)

Finally, he points to an ideal future for their assets:

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” (1 Timothy 6:19a).

Paul repeatedly points to the future of the donors' assets. In practical fundraising, the goal is the same. It's to discuss the future of the asset. It's to discuss the future of the wealth. This can start simple. For example,

- “What are your future plans for your business?”
- “How long do you think you'll keep the vacation house?”
- “How long do you think you'll stay invested in the asset?”

The key is the future. It's the key because, aside from giving, there are only two options. It doesn't matter what the asset is. It doesn't matter what the asset story is. The story can end in only two ways:

1. They sell it.
2. They die with it.

Both of these create ideal scenarios for a giving conversation. An upcoming sale is a perfect setting to talk about giving. It's much easier to share wealth at such moments. People are more generous with big, unearned gains than with regular, earned income.³¹ Follow-up questions could include:

- “What will that mean to you?” “Have you thought about using the sale or transition of your business as an opportunity to achieve some of your charitable goals in addition to financial goals?”
- “Many donors giving at your level use appreciated assets instead of cash because they get a double tax benefit. Have you ever considered giving in that way?”
- “When that day comes, what’s the most personally meaningful thing you might consider doing with the proceeds? Is there a cause or project that touches your heart?”

If they aren't planning to sell it, then they're planning to die with it. This can trigger discussions about meaningful life goals. Paul too begins with this end in mind,

“You see we came into this world with nothing, and nothing is going with us on the way out!” (1 Timothy 6:7, The Voice).

This is a light, breezy way to make an obvious point about the future. Holding wealth is not a permanent option. As one writer puts it,

“life is ultimately like a game of Monopoly: you go around a few times; you collect paper money and houses; and then, sooner or later, it all goes back in the box.”³²

Starting from this future makes it easier to hold wealth lightly. The question is no longer if they'll lose the wealth. That

loss is inevitable. The only question is if they'll use it before they lose it.

The inheritance conversation

The future wealth conversation often leads to estate planning wealth conversations. A common future plan is just to leave everything as an inheritance. Providing for family is an important goal. (1 Timothy 5:8). But it's not an unlimited goal. Paul explains,

“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:8).

Once that goal is fulfilled, more is not necessarily better. Once that goal is fulfilled, the charitable conversation becomes relevant.

The inheritance conversation can lead to an important comparison. How much are they transferring to heirs each year right now? How does this compare to the size of the expected inheritance? If it simply replaces their annual gifts, then it matches their current desire to benefit heirs. If it's dramatically larger, then something else is happening. The plan to leave a big inheritance might just be an excuse for hoarding wealth.

The estate planning topic can lead to other powerful wealth conversations. Suppose a person is planning to leave an inheritance. What might this conversation sound like?

“That makes sense. Scripture says it's important not to leave family members in a needy circumstance. (1 Timothy 5:8, 16). It also says food, clothing and shelter are enough for contentment. (1 Timothy 6:8). When you pass away, will any of your family members need your wealth for food, clothing, and shelter? Or will it just be extra for them?”

“Hmmm. OK, so you’ve seen people get inheritances before, right? Does a big estate always lead to family harmony? (Luke 12:13-15). Does getting an unearned inheritance make people more likely or less likely to make wise life choices? (Luke 15:12-13).”

“Think about 100 years from now. How likely is it that this extra inheritance would have been used up? And how likely is it that it would be used according to your values?”

“So, who do you think is responsible for the use of your wealth? It’s you, right? You control it, right?”

“Hypothetically, what would happen if you let future generations control their own wealth and you decided to control your own wealth? If you got permission to use your own wealth, right now, in a way that matched your own values, what would that look like? Are there any causes that have been important in your life? Is there anything meaningful you would want to accomplish with your wealth? Is there any lasting impact you would like to make?”

So, is the goal here to get a gift in the will? No. But that can be an important step. The estate gift is a commitment to give wealth. For most people, it’s the first time they’ll ever commit to a gift from their wealth, not just their income.

Committing to a charitable estate gift creates a wealth-sharing mindset. After that, making a big lifetime gift only changes the timing of the transfer, not the destination. That change in gift timing also increases gift enjoyment. It’s more enjoyable to make an impact today than to just imagine it happening in the future. It’s more fun to do it yourself than to just leave instructions for someone else to do it.

Time and money: A future focus makes big giving easy

We want to talk about wealth and wealth plans. As a practical matter, the fundraising “punchline” is this future. Getting the donor to focus on the future reveals a truth. The rich person’s ownership is going to disappear. Wealth comes with a timer.

Wealthy people like to hold wealth. That’s why they became or stayed wealthy in the first place. They didn’t blow it on wild living. They weren’t lazy about building, managing, or protecting it. Wealthy people like to hold wealth. They are accumulators.³³

So, how do we get an accumulator to give? How do we get a hoarder to share? This starts by connecting wealth with time. It starts by moving to the end of the wealth-holding story. It starts by showing that wealth holding is temporary.

What do people want to do with their wealth? The accumulators want to hold it. They want to protect it. They want to keep it. Planning for the future reveals that to be impossible. They can’t keep it. Their ownership is going to disappear.

This recognition does several things. It reduces the importance of wealth holding. Wealth holding is, ultimately, futile. It can’t continue for long. At the end, too much wealth holding is foolish. Burying wealth just to die with it doesn’t help the owner at all.

The future of our wealth is the loss of our wealth. We are going to lose it no matter what. Facing this reality changes the logic of wealth hoarding. It also changes the cost of wealth sharing.

Is a \$10 million gift expensive? If wealth holding were permanent, it would be. But wealth holding is not permanent. It's temporary. If the alternative is just burying it and dying with it, which plan makes more sense? Which is a smarter use of the wealth? Which is more enjoyable?

Attaching time to wealth reframes the cost of the gift. It makes the big gift easy. It makes the big gift make sense. The wealth-sharing “call to adventure” is big. But the story setting makes it feel reasonable. It's set in the land of disappearing wealth. Now is an opportune moment to do something with it before it disappears. This urgency encourages wealth sharing.

PART IV

THIS IS ABOUT GIVING BIG!

(Message 2: Let's talk about wealth!)

Fear of big giving

Gifts of wealth are big gifts. They might be gifts of houses or land. They might be gifts of business interests. They might be gifts of estates. They are the largest charitable transfers. They are big gifts. Wealth sharing is big.³⁴

For many people, big fundraising is scary. Why? Why would we rather discuss a \$100 gift than a \$100 million gift? Conversations with wealthy people can be scary. Conversations with wealthy people about their wealth can be even scarier. Conversations with wealthy people about sharing their wealth may be the scariest of all.

This fear of big giving conversations sometimes comes from having the wrong goal. It's scary because we're trying to do the wrong thing. We're trying to get people to give. But wait. Isn't that what fundraising is supposed to do? Not exactly.

If we're trying to get the donor to give away money, then any ask is uncomfortable. A big ask is even worse. We're asking them to give up so much! How could they not be offended? Shouldn't we ask for less? Shouldn't we ask for something that would be more comfortable to give up?

But notice, this passage doesn't say, "Give away your money." It says, "Do good." Now, reconsider big fundraising in those terms. Does it make sense to think this way:

"My wish for you ... is that you make only a small impact. I really don't want you to do too much good. I won't even talk with you about those big-impact options. I don't want that for you. I would rather that you just bury your wealth and die with it. Then you can explain why you did that to the one who put you in charge of it. That's the ending I want for you."

If the goal is to get someone "to give away," a big gift is unpleasant. It's a loss. It may be a necessary loss, but it's still painful. We naturally want to minimize this pain.

But if the goal is to get a person to do good, this changes things. We don't want him to do just a little bit of good. We want him to do a lot. Doing more good is better! We don't want him to have just a few little good works. We want him to be rich in good works! We don't want him to give just a little bit. We want him to give big!³⁵

It's also important to keep the alternative in mind. What happens to their wealth otherwise? If we understand wealth, we know that it's about to disappear. It's a use-it-or-lose-it situation. Ownership will always vanish at the end of life. It often does so well before.

Giving up wealth is not just a possibility. It's guaranteed. It's going to happen no matter what. The only question is how they will use it before ownership disappears. They can bury it. They can binge with it. Or they can do good with it. The last option is the best one. It's the most enjoyable one. Why wouldn't we want that for them?

Do you want big giving?

This ministry is not just about giving. It's about giving big. It's not just about sharing. It's about wealth sharing. It's not just about doing some good. It's about becoming rich in good works. It's not about grudgingly giving just a little. It's about being generous. It's about creating big results.

Succeeding in this big endeavor takes many things. But it starts with one thing. It starts with an obvious question. Do we want to do this? Do we want our donors to give big?

Ask any fundraiser, and you'll likely hear a yes. The answer is so obvious it seems like a silly question. But it's not. It's an important question. It may be the important question. It is the one question most likely to distinguish top-performing fundraisers.

One study tracked several hundred major gift fundraisers. It found the familiar 80/20 rule. The top 20% of fundraisers raised about 80% of the money. That's no surprise. But what caused this? What led to this success for the top 20%?

One difference was stark. These top-performing fundraisers wanted their donors to give big. The others did not. The researchers explained,

“We found that the bottom 80% of fundraisers by money raised had average asks of 44% of their [donors'] internal capacity ratings ... When the top 20% of fundraisers asked for a gift, their average ask was just over 100% of the rating.”³⁶

Do you want your donors to give big? Most fundraisers did not. They didn't even ask for that gift. In data analytics, giving big means giving at capacity. The top performers – the

20% of the 80/20 rule – asked for gifts at the donor’s capacity. They asked big. The others did not.

The top performers were different. Their asks were different. Their mindset was also different. Again, the researchers explained,

“The higher performing fundraisers were more likely to say, ‘Research says this donor can give \$100k. I start by thinking, ‘What would it take for them to give \$100k?’” In other words, they were trying to determine how to get the best gift from each donor ... These confident fundraisers will begin with the question, ‘What would it take for this prospect to give a gift at their capacity?’”³⁷

The difference was clear. Some fundraisers wanted their donors to give big. They focused on how to get them to give at capacity.

Others didn’t really want that. They didn’t even ask for that. Instead, they focused on the easy gift. They focused on the comfortable gift. They focused on what they could “get away with.”

What do we want for our donors? Do we want them to give big? Then we must talk about it. Do we want them “to be rich in good works?” Then we must talk about it. Do we want them “to be generous?” Then we must talk about it.

What do we want for our wealthy donors? How do we want them to use their temporary, disappearing wealth? Do we want them to binge with it? Do we want them to bury it and lose it at death? Or do we want them to enjoy it by using it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18)?

This is what Paul wanted for wealthy Christians. If we want that too, we have to talk about it. We have to come alongside them. We have to share this authorized message with them. We have to talk about wealth. We have to talk about giving big!

Fear of wealth conversations

This is a ministry to the wealthy. It's a ministry about their wealth. It has a message about sharing their wealth. How does Paul's instruction differ from the typical approach to these topics?

Often, we don't like to talk about money. A WWJD bracelet is fine. Actually talking about money as much as Jesus did? That's a different story. But talking about money is necessary. If we don't talk about money, it's hard to encourage generosity.

Of course, Paul's instruction goes beyond this. It's more extreme. He isn't just talking about money. He's talking about wealth. He's talking about the donor's wealth. He's directing Timothy to talk to the donor about the donor's wealth.

Fundraisers are good at talking to people. So are ministers. They're good at talking about people's lives. They're good at talking about their own organizations. They're good at talking about many things – but not wealth.

Maybe it's fear. Maybe it's self-doubt. Maybe it's ignorance. Whatever the cause, fundraisers often aren't even trying. They aren't trying to talk about wealth. They aren't trying to have wealth conversations. This resistance is natural. It may be why Paul felt it necessary to mention wealth seven times in one sentence.

This is a different kind of fundraising. These are not small, pocket-change decisions. These are major life-investment gifts. This is not income sharing. It's wealth sharing. It's not just giving. It's giving big.

Let's get practical. What do these large gifts look like? What do mega-gifts look like? One study looked at the largest gifts received by hundreds of different colleges and universities. These gifts were massive. They were also different. They looked different. They looked like wealth.

These massive gifts were gifts of assets, not cash. In fact, most of these mega-gifts didn't include even a single dollar of cash.³⁸ Not one penny. This was wealth sharing, not income sharing. Wealth sharing looks different because wealth looks different.

Learn something about wealth

Suppose you decided to start a prison ministry. Would you maybe want to learn something about prison life? That might be a good idea, right? Or would you object,

“But I'm never going to be a prisoner. So why do I need to learn this stuff?”

Of course not.

We learn the stuff because this is the group we are ministering to. We need to know what they care about. We need to know the challenges they're dealing with. As we learn more, it makes it easier to have conversations. It makes it easier to connect.

Now suppose we're going to follow Paul's instructions and have a ministry to the wealthy. Might we want to learn

something about wealth? That might be a good idea, right?
Should you object,

“But I’m not going to be a wealth manager or tax accountant. I’m certainly not going to become wealthy. So, why do I need to learn this stuff?”

Of course not.

We learn the stuff because this is the group we are ministering to. We need to know what they care about. We need to know the challenges they are dealing with. As we learn more, it makes it easier to have conversations. It makes it easier to connect.

If we’re intimidated by wealth management, we won’t bring it up. We’ll tend to avoid wealth conversations.³⁹ If we’re intimidated by the wealthy, we won’t be effective ministers to them.⁴⁰ We’ll tend to avoid them.

Fear is the enemy of effective ministry. Fear keeps people from foreign missions. It keeps people from prison ministry. And it keeps people from ministering to the rich.

Asset-donor stories in ancient words

We want to minister to the wealthy. We want to have wealth conversations. We want to encourage wealth sharing. We can start by learning something about wealth. But what then? How do we start the conversation?

There are several ways to have wealth conversations. Scripture gives us examples. The most common example is ... the example. In fundraising terms, this is the donor story.

When Paul wants to encourage the Corinthians to give, how does he start? He starts with an example. He starts with

the example of other donors. These are nearby donors who are like the Corinthians. They've already given. They've given a lot.

Luke explains how giving worked in the early church. How? He gives examples. He gives examples of asset gifts. He gives examples of groups of asset gift donors. He explains,

“all who were owners of land [*chōriōn*] or houses [*oikiōn*] would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales” (Acts 4:34b).

He explains,

“They sold their lands [*ktēmata*] and other property [*hyparxeis*], and distributed the proceeds among all,” (Acts 2:45a).⁴¹

He also gives an example of a specific donor's asset gift. He names Barnabas. Barnabas

“owned a tract of land [*agrou*]. So he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.” (Acts 4:37).

What you might miss in English is the great variety of Luke's asset examples. This isn't just an asset giving example. It's five of them. The various asset gifts were:

- *Ktēmata*: A piece of landed property, a field, vineyards, or houses (that had been actively obtained by the person)⁴²
- *Hyparxeis*: Possessions, goods, wealth, moveable property
- *Chōriōn*: A place, piece of land, field, property, estate, (often family or inherited lands)
- *Oikiōn*: A house; property, wealth, goods

- *Agrou*: A field; the country, lands, property in land, a country estate

Such asset donor stories are powerful. They're powerful because asset-donor stories are wealth-sharing stories. Using many different examples can help donors realize that the asset-giving story applies to them, too.

Asset-donor stories in modern practice

Donor examples are helpful. They are powerful. We can use them in our own instruction. We might say,

“John, you’ve been such a great partner for this ministry. I want to thank you for all your many gifts. Let me ask you, have you ever considered giving something other than cash?”

No? Well, the reason I ask is that I was working with another donor. You remind me of him, you both [insert similarity].

He recently made a gift, but instead of giving cash, he gave appreciated stocks. Since he owned them for more than a year, he still got the full tax deduction. By giving it, he also avoided the capital gains taxes that would have been due whenever he sold it. So, he got a double tax benefit.

This works with any appreciated asset. Is this something you might ever consider doing?”

We can give donor examples in a conversation. We can do it in a newsletter. We can do it on a website. We can do it in a letter.

Instead of just talking about some great new work, mention one of the donors who helped make it happen. Share a

donor story. And why not make that donor story about a gift of an asset instead of cash? Or why not discuss their decision to include a gift in their will? A gift in a will is not income sharing. It's wealth sharing. It's another type of asset gift.

The idea is to share examples. We want to share examples of asset gifts. We want to share examples of gifts of wealth. As these examples accumulate, they create a "social norm." They show that people "like us" make gifts like these.

How else might we give these examples? We could even do it in a donor survey. We might ask,

"Many people like to support this ministry in a variety of ways. Which of the following might you consider in the next six months?"

Gift by check

Gift by monthly account withdrawals

Gift by credit card

Gift of stocks

Gift in a will [if you happen to sign a new one]

Gift in a will in memory/honor of a loved one

Gift from an IRA, 401(K), retirement account

Gift of real estate

Gift of unneeded life insurance policy

This would include checkbox options of: Unlikely,
Possibly, Likely, and Would like more info."

Asset sharing stories are powerful. They're powerful because asset-sharing stories are wealth-sharing stories. Using many different examples helps donors connect that story to their own circumstances.

However we choose to do it, asset sharing examples and stories are powerful. They can spark an idea. They can establish a social norm. They provide an example of sharing wealth. They provide an example of sharing big!

Offering real wealth-sharing opportunities

This ministry is about wealth conversations. It's about wealth and wealth sharing. That's great. But when the donors decide to share wealth, will they do it at your organization?

Wealth sharing is giving, but it's giving big. Are we offering big giving opportunities? Are they even an option on the menu? It's not enough to say,

“We've never refused a check!”

Or,

“If we get that extra million, we'll figure out something to do with it.”

That's not motivational. It's not visualizable. It's not tangible. It's not offering a compelling opportunity for the donor to do good work. It's not offering to make them rich in beautiful, good works.

Suppose your organization has a special ministry. Maybe it's an outreach for the homeless. The appeal is simply,

“Please support the homeless outreach.”

Is this an opportunity for wealth sharing? It's hard to tell. Is it an opportunity for giving big? Is it a request for \$100 or \$100,000? It's hard to tell. What difference would giving one versus the other make? What work would each buy? It's hard to tell.

This just says, “Please give.” It gives no reason to make a large gift. A larger gift isn’t linked to any particular result. It’s not really on the menu.

Now, let’s change it. Let’s get specific about the work donors are buying. Let’s include a big gift option. Maybe it’s this:

“Our homeless ministry reaches over 100 people every month with emergency food, shelter, counseling, and sharing the love of Jesus. Your gift of \$330 runs this entire program for a day. \$10,000 covers a month. \$120,000 runs it for the whole year. \$2.4 million endows this outreach permanently.”

Now, the big gift becomes an option. The giving menu includes a big number with a big, specific impact. There’s a reason not just to give, but to give big.

Often, organizations fail to take even this first step. They never build big giving opportunities. They’re focused only on meeting some routine budget.

Saying, “We’ll accept a big gift,” doesn’t create a big giving opportunity. It’s not enough just to accept unrestricted checks. Our passage doesn’t tell donors to write a check. It tells them to do good work.

What specific, tangible good work does their gift buy at your organization? What good work will they do? Can they do it at scale? Can they move beyond doing good work to becoming “rich in good works?” George Barna’s study of church fundraising describes it this way:

“Unless the church can realistically provide people with a sense of the significance and the urgency of the financial need, the people will merely yawn and look to other

[charities] ... the most affluent churches are able to describe their ministry plans and adventures in terms of the necessity of raising specific sums of money to reach people-related goals.”⁴³

Small gifts are given to an organization. Big gifts are not. Big gifts are given through an organization. Donors wield the organization as their instrument of impact. They use it as their tool to do good. This is why big gifts usually go to big organizations. They're more reliable instruments for making a big impact.

If the large gift doesn't make a specific impact, there's no way to know what good it did. If we don't offer donors that opportunity, they'll still do good. They'll just use a different instrument. They'll use a different organization.

Always be offering

Other organizations are always ready to be an instrument of big impact. Wealthy donors to a university will hear about big giving options. They'll hear about future construction possibilities. They'll hear about endowed scholarships. They'll hear about named professorships. They'll hear about big gifts that buy specific results.

Attractive big gift options aren't vague or fuzzy. Make sure your big gift options are clear and visualizable. Make sure they're planned and ready to go. Make sure they're on the menu.

Talk about wealth and wealth sharing. Talk about big gifts. Make big gifts attractive at your organization. Expect them. Plan for them. Offer them. Get good at them. Get good at becoming an instrument of big impact. Get ready for big giving!

¹ [Carlson, K., Kim, J., Lusardi, A., & Camerer, C. F. (2015). Bankruptcy rates among NFL players with short-lived income spikes. *American Economic Review*, 105(5), 381-84]; See also, “The list of celebrities who have filed bankruptcy is not only long, but also surprising given the commercial success of those celebrities.” [Campbell, J. C. (2005). Who owns Kim Basinger: The right of publicity’s place in the bankruptcy system. *Journal of Intellectual Property Law*, 13, 179-204. p. 185.]

² Joulfaian, D. (2001). Charitable giving in life and at death. In W. G. Gale, J. R. Hines Jr., & J. Slemrod (Eds.), *Rethinking estate and gift taxation* (pp. 350-374). The Brookings Institution Press; Joulfaian, D. (2017). *Is charitable giving by the rich really responsive to the income tax?* SSRN <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1952889>

³ Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. (2019, June 6). *Financial Accounts of the United States - Z.1*, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/z1/20190606/html/b101h.htm>

In 2018, households held \$113,094.2 billion in total financial assets and \$1,375.9 billion in checkable deposits and currency. That means 1.2% of total financial wealth was held in “cash” by that definition. Appending money market fund shares to this adds another \$1,701.4 billion. Combined, this sums to 2.7% of household financial wealth. Household financial wealth excludes wealth from real estate. Thus, the share of total wealth held in cash would be much smaller.

⁴ Wallace, J., & Erickson, J. (1992). *Hard drive: Bill Gates and the making of the Microsoft empire*. Wiley.

⁵ This was done by acquiring ownership in a retail stamps company, Blue Chip Stamps, and using the float to purchase shares of other companies. See, The Science of Hitting. (2017, July 17). *Berkshire and Blue Chip stamps*, <https://www.gurufocus.com/news/543005/berkshire-and-blue-chip-stamps>

⁶ *Adēlotēti* describes wealth as uncertain, disappearing, or hidden. [Strong, J. (1890). *A concise dictionary of the words in the Greek New Testament*. Thomas Nelson. p. 8.]

⁷ See New International Version; Christian Standard Bible

⁸ Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 290. *Thēsauros, -ou, o*.

⁹ James III, R. N., & Jones, K. S. (2011). Tithing and religious charitable giving in America. *Applied Economics*, 43(19), 2441-2450. Table 2. Descriptive statistics on tithers and tithing groups (Consumer Expenditure Survey 1995–2005, n=56,663).

¹⁰ See discussion of statistics in Chapter 1, “The people group: To those who are rich”; See also the review of statistics related to giving to religious organizations in James III, R. N. (2019). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning & Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285.

¹¹ For example, The National Association of Charitable Gift Planners or The International Association of Advisors in Philanthropy.

¹² A few technical notes. First, this excluded nonprofits that shifted from cash only to cash & securities. (The 5-year growth for those nonprofits was over 100%.) It also excluded those who shifted in the other direction. These growth rates reflected within-organization growth for organizations that were consistently cash only or consistently cash & securities. Second, this included all nonprofits in the country filing the electronic form. The dataset consisted of over a million tax

returns. Third, a similarly large difference arose for contributions growth over 5 years, 3 years, or in the same year. Fourth, this difference arose for every cause type (all 26 NTEE codes). Fifth, this difference also arose for gifts of real estate as with gifts of securities.

¹³ See discussion of results for all 26 NTEE (National Taxonomy of Exempt Entity) codes in the original paper. James III, R. N. (2018). Cash is not king for fund-raising: Gifts of noncash assets predict current and future contributions growth. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 29(2), 159-179.

¹⁴ Koshy, C. (2020, August 12). *Data dive 'Why cash is not king in fundraising'*. [Webinar recording]. Endowment Partners. Las Vegas, NV <https://share.vidyard.com/watch/tvdptudNMEsa1DhDayV2HZ?>

¹⁵ Carlsson, F., He, H., & Martinsson, P. (2013). Easy come, easy go. *Experimental Economics*, 16(2), 190-207.

¹⁶ Arkes, H. R., Joyner, C. A., Pezzo, M. V., Nash, J. G., Siegel-Jacobs, K., & Stone, E. (1994). The psychology of windfall gains. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 59(3), 331-347; Konow, J. (2010). Mixed feelings: Theories of and evidence on giving. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(3-4), 279-297; Li, H., Liang, J., Xu, H., & Liu, Y. (2019). Does windfall money encourage charitable giving? An experimental study. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(4), 841-848; Reinstein, D., & Riener, G. (2012). Decomposing desert and tangibility effects in a charitable giving experiment. *Experimental Economics*, 15(1), 229-240.

¹⁷ James III, R. N. (2019). The emerging potential of longitudinal empirical research in estate planning: Examples from charitable bequests. *UC Davis Law Review*, 53, 2397-3431.

¹⁸ Roberts, J. A., & Roberts, C. R. (2012). Money matters: Does the symbolic presence of money affect charitable giving and attitudes among adolescents? *Young Consumers*, 13(4), 329-336; Vohs, K. D., Mead, N. L., & Goode, M. R. (2008). Merely activating the concept of money changes personal and interpersonal behavior. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(3), 208-212.

¹⁹ Vohs, K. D., Mead, N. L., & Goode, M. R. (2006). The psychological consequences of money. *Science*, 314(5802), 1154-1156.

²⁰ Molinsky, A. L., Grant, A. M., & Margolis, J. D. (2012). The bedside manner of homo economicus: How and why priming an economic schema reduces compassion. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 119, 27-37.

²¹ Roberts, J. A., & Roberts, C. R. (2012). Money matters: Does the symbolic presence of money affect charitable giving and attitudes among adolescents? *Young Consumers*, 13(4), 329-336; Vohs, K. D., Mead, N. L., & Goode, M. R. (2008). Merely activating the concept of money changes personal and interpersonal behavior. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(3), 208-212.

²² Cheal, D. (1987). Showing them you love them: Gift giving and the dialectic of intimacy. *The Sociological Review*, 35(1), 150-169.

²³ Gershon, R., & Cryder, C. (2018). Goods donations increase charitable credit for low-warmth donors. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 45, 451-469; Kube, S., Maréchal, M. A., & Puppe, C. (2012). The currency of reciprocity: Gift exchange in the workplace. *American Economic Review*, 102(4), 1644-62; See also Kube, S., Maréchal, M.A., Puppe, C., 2010. *The currency of reciprocity – Gift exchange in the workplace*. IEW Working paper 377. University of Zurich. http://conference.iza.org/conference_files/BLE2008/4534.pdf

²⁴ In the US, most noncash gifts (like stocks, bonds, and real estate) come from the top 1.3% highest-income donors. See Internal Revenue Service - Statistics of Income Division. (2021, Spring). Individual noncash charitable contributions, tax year 2018. *Statistics of Income Bulletin*. Table 1A. <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/soi-a-incc-id2103.pdf>. (Calculations from this table show that the 1.3% of donors with adjusted gross incomes of \$2MM or more donated 54.2% of the noncash charitable gifts.)

²⁵ “In 2017, when only 2,902 estates with charitable transfers filed estate tax returns, these estates still produced the majority (59%) of all bequest dollars transferred to charity in the country.” [James, R. N., III. (2020). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning & Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285. p. 250.] Also see a total of 2,813,503 decedents in 2017 at <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db328-h.pdf>

²⁶ In sequence, these words in the passage are rich, riches, richly, rich, generous (a newly constructed word that can reference being a good sharer of wealth or abundance), storing up treasure, and foundation See “Let’s talk about wealth!” Chapter 4 in *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.

²⁷ Questions paraphrased from Greg Sharkey. Sharkey, G. (2021, March 25). Personal communication. Greg Sharkey, Senior Philanthropy Advisor, The Nature Conservancy.

²⁸ Rice, D. (2009, October). *Asking for principal gifts – 5 approaches*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, National Harbor, MD. p. 2.

²⁹ Steenhuisen, J. (2015, October 23). *A future for gift planning*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning.

³⁰ It’s also possible to learn that the donor is not a wealth holder. That’s also important to know. Part of the ministry to the wealthy is finding out who is in this target category. We don’t necessarily need to have wealth conversations with someone who is not a wealth holder.

³¹ Arkes, H. R., Joyner, C. A., Pezzo, M. V., Nash, J. G., Siegel-Jacobs, K., & Stone, E. (1994). The psychology of windfall gains. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 59(3), 331-347; Carlsson, F., He, H., & Martinsson, P. (2013). Easy come, easy go. *Experimental Economics*, 16(2), 190-207; Konow, J. (2010). Mixed feelings: Theories of and evidence on giving. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(3-4), 279-297; Li, H., Liang, J., Xu, H., & Liu, Y. (2019). Does windfall money encourage charitable giving? An experimental study. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(4), 841-848; Muehlbacher, S., & Kirchler, E. (2009). Origin of endowments in public good games: The impact of effort on contributions. *Journal of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Economics*, 2(1), 59-67; Reinstein, D., & Riener, G. (2012). Decomposing desert and tangibility effects in a charitable giving experiment. *Experimental Economics*, 15(1), 229-240.

³² Jeremiah, D. (2013). *What are you afraid of? Facing down your fears with faith*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. p. 68.

³³ This passage describes a ministry to those who are rich, not to those who have a high income. This is not a trivial distinction. The rich are different. They are accumulators. This is a personality characteristic. The high income may or may not be accumulators – we don’t know. This ministry is a ministry to the wealth holders – the wealth accumulators. The message is designed for this particular people group.

³⁴ As we'll explore later, this matches the passage's context. Paul's passage parallels a famous act of generosity from a well-known play, Menander's *Dyskolos*. That act of generosity resulted in sharing everything – all wealth, all inheritance, all family rights. Paul is alluding to a gift ... of everything. Yet, this is not a gift that impoverishes. It's a gift that shares. It joins together and creates a new family with shared wealth.

³⁵ "The scale of his giving is measured by richly (cf. Acts 14:17; 17:25; Jas 1:5)." [Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. pi. 122.]

³⁶ Birkholz, J. & Lampi, A. (2023). *Benefactors: Why some fundraising professionals always succeed*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 95-96.

³⁷ Birkholz, J. & Lampi, A. (2023). *Benefactors: Why some fundraising professionals always succeed*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 95-96.

³⁸ "Cash and cash equivalents were a component of 40% of reported gifts." [Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A. & King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 18.]

³⁹ "Most pastors, church staff and lay leaders are both inadequately trained and emotionally unprepared for communicating about and actually raising the kind of money required to lead a church toward the fulfillment of its vision." [Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church*. Regal Books. p. 13.]

⁴⁰ "Hence we may observe, (1.) Ministers must not be afraid of the rich;" [Henry, M. (1710/1935). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible* (Vol. 6). Fleming H. Revell Publishers. p. 831.]

⁴¹ Weymouth New Testament

⁴² This implication comes from the origin of *ktēmata* from *ktāomai* "to acquire, get or procure a thing for one's self". [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press; Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company.]

⁴³ Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. Gospel Light Publications. p. 98.

Chapter 5

Message 3: People like us enjoy doing things like this!

- *Biblical fundraising shows a shared social norm of generosity from others' examples.*
- *Ordinary fundraising asks for isolated donation decisions.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies **us** with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

People like us: Different gifts, same decision

The message in this passage begins with the rich person's backstory. It then moves to "us". God has richly supplied each of us, just in different ways. What are we supposed to do with this rich supply? We're supposed to enjoy it. How? We enjoy it by using it

"to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share" (1 Timothy 6:18).

We all, together, share from whatever God has richly blessed us with. We all use it to do good. We all share generously. Yes, we each receive different things. But the choice of what to do with them is the same.

This idea appears elsewhere in scripture. Peter writes, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in

serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God.” (1 Peter 4:10).

Paul writes,

“However, since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to use them properly: if prophecy, in proportion to one’s faith; if service, in the act of serving; or the one who teaches, in the act of teaching; or the one who exhorts, in the work of exhortation; the one who gives, with generosity; the one who is in leadership, with diligence; the one who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” (Romans 12:6-8).

God richly supplies us. He supplies us with each and every thing. The challenge from this passage applies to every gift from God – not just wealth.

Consider those who have been given the gift of teaching. What should they do with it? They could bury it in the ground. Fear could cause them to keep it hidden. But hiding it won’t allow it to grow. (It might even rust, fade, or begin to disappear.)

Instead, they could choose to enjoy it. How? By putting it to work. They could use their gift of teaching to do good. They could use it to become rich in visible good works. They could become a good sharer of their gift of teaching. They could share it with the fellowship community.

In Jesus’s parable, the wise servant immediately put his talent to work. And by doing so, he ends up with even more. By putting the talent to work, the talent grows. Plus, he gets much, much more when the master returns. The one with the gift of teaching could do the same. By putting the gift to work, the gift grows.

In our passage, the rich person faces a similar challenge:

“You have temporary wealth. What will you do with it? Will you bury it and die with it? Or will you enjoy it by putting it to work doing good?”

The rich person is challenged. But the rich person isn't alone. Each of us faces this same choice. Each of us has been richly supplied, just with different things. But the choice is the same. Fear says,

“Hide your gift.”

Scripture says,

“Enjoy your gift by putting it to work.”

People like us: The social norm

Effective fundraising encourages generosity. It leads to giving. Many messages can encourage giving. The most powerful is often the social norm. The effective social norm causes a person to think,

“People like us enjoy doing things like this!”

In fundraising, it causes the donor to think,

“People like us enjoy making gifts like this!”

In this passage, what is the social norm? It is to share abundantly or generously. The challenge is the same for all of us. The same social norm applies regardless of how God has richly blessed us.

How can we set this social norm of sharing generously? How can we show donors that it is true? We can do it by sharing examples. We share examples of others who are like the donor. We share examples of what people like “us” do. These examples create a social norm.

In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul writes a fundraising “appeal letter.” In 8:6, he lets the Corinthians know they should give. (They should “complete” their gift.) But he doesn’t start with this instruction.

He starts with an example of other donors like them. (1 Corinthians 8:1-5). Their Macedonian neighbors to the north have already given. They’ve given generously. They’ve given joyfully. Their example shows that

“People like us enjoy making gifts like this.”

We can use this same approach in modern fundraising.

Social norms in asset-giving requests: Modern and ancient

Fundraising can be scary. Talking to other people about giving their money can be scary. What’s worse? Talking about giving their wealth. Talking about gifts of assets – houses, land, and business interests – can be really scary.

Can it get worse? Yes. Talking to people about their death is worse. Put all three together, and we have planned or legacy giving. This is talking to people about (1) giving, (2) their assets or wealth, (3) at their death.

So, how do we do this? How do we talk about gifts of assets? How do we talk about estate gifts? It’s simple. We talk about other people’s gifts. We talk about other people like the donor who have done these kinds of things before. We share stories that show the donor that

“People like us enjoy doing things like this.”

Does this work? Yes. We can see it in experimental research. One study worked with a large law firm. It randomly assigned 3,000 estate-planning clients to one of three groups:

- (1) The first group was not asked about putting a charitable gift in their will. In this group, 4.9% included a gift to charity.
- (2) The second group was asked, “Would you like to leave any money to charity in your will?” In this group, 10.8% included a gift to charity. Giving more than doubled.
- (3) The third group was also asked about making a gift to charity. But for this group, the statement began with, “Many of our customers like to leave money to charity in their will ...”¹ In this group, 15.4% included a gift to charity. Plus, the average gift size doubled.

One short phrase made a massive difference. Asking helped. Mentioning others’ generosity helped even more. It led to a six-fold increase in giving.

What about real-world fundraising practice? How do the most effective fundraisers ask for a gift in a will? They do the same thing. They point to other people like the donor who have made these gifts.

What does this sound like? It can sound like this:

- “Mrs. Jones, you are such a wonderful and loyal donor. Many of our most loyal donors are including Kent State in their estate plans in order to make an impact beyond their lifetime. Have you ever considered remembering Kent State in your will?”²
- “Many donors who give as regularly as you have put our organization in their will; what are your thoughts about doing that?”³

- “Thank you so much for all your support for so many years – we truly appreciate it. Donors like you who have supported us for so long often include a gift in their estate plans. I’d love to say thank you for that as well if you’ve done so. Have you included us? Have you considered it?”⁴

Notice precisely what these successful fundraisers do. Two things precede the ask. First is the donor’s philanthropic history. They are generous people. Second is what others, like the donor, have done before. People like them have done things like this. The gift matches their life history, their values, and their people.

What model does Paul give to Timothy? It’s the same model:

- (1) Saying yes to wealth sharing matches with the donor’s life history.

They have not, in the past, placed their hope in hidden and uncertain wealth. Instead, they’ve placed their hope in God.

- (2) Saying yes to wealth sharing matches the donor’s values.

They are continuing in an already ongoing process. It’s a process of being not high-minded. They’re not above or separated from the fellowship community.

- (3) Saying yes to wealth sharing matches with the donor’s people.

It matches what other people in the fellowship community do. We all enjoy whatever God has richly blessed us with by sharing it together.

Paul's approach works. It matches what the most effective fundraisers do. It shows donors how their people, values, and life history compel their giving.

With asset gifts, we might say,

“Many donors giving at your level like to give assets rather than cash. That's because giving stocks, real estate, or other investments creates a double tax benefit. It's a smarter way to give. Have you ever considered giving something other than cash?”

For other gifts, we can point to other examples. We can mention others like the donor who

- Commit to multi-year pledges
- Become leadership level donors
- Fund permanent endowments
- Create scholarships

Whatever the focus of the current campaign, we can use examples of others' gifts. We can use these examples to communicate that

“People like us enjoy making gifts like this.”

Social norms in asset-giving stories: Ancient

Paul begins his fundraising appeal with a donor story. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). He sets a social norm of giving joyfully and generously. That's great. But what if we want to encourage gifts of assets? How can we do that?

We do it the same way. We share donor stories. We share stories about gifts of assets. This is nothing new. We see it in New Testament donor stories.

Barnabas made a gift of real estate.⁵ Mary of Bethany's asset gift of pure nard was worth a year's wages.⁶ The early church shared generously. But what did they share? The Book of Acts uses five different words to describe the different types of wealth, possessions, property, land, and houses that were shared.⁷

These aren't just donor stories. These are asset-sharing stories. These are wealth-sharing stories.

Social norms in asset-giving stories: Modern

We can follow the examples from the Bible. We can share donor stories. We can share donor stories about gifts of wealth. We can share donor stories about gifts of assets. We can share examples that set a social norm. We can build a social norm that

“People like us enjoy making gifts of assets.”

But maybe you feel like you can't. Maybe you feel like you don't have any inspirational stories. Maybe you haven't worked with any such wealthy donors. Or maybe you don't have permission to share their stories.

That's OK. These don't have to be your donors. There are donor stories everywhere! There are donor stories in the Bible. There are donor stories online.⁸ There are donor stories in history. We can share all of these stories. And they work.

Claire Guadiana had massive success in fundraising. As president of Connecticut College, she more than quadrupled the college's endowment. She did it with inspiring donor stories. She got these stories from American History. She recommends,

“Show how the vision of a major donor can transform an institution (Mary Garrett at Johns Hopkins) or an entire

city (Ken Dayton in Minneapolis).”⁹

She used these inspirational donor stories from history. But the key was not just the story. The key was her introduction to the story. She began them with a phrase like,

“You know, you remind me of [insert historical philanthropist’s name].”

The donor would respond with,

“Who is that?”

She would then share the story. She shared the story of a donor whose gifts had made a major impact.¹⁰

This was an aspirational example. But because of her introduction, this wasn’t just an example. For the donor, it was an example of someone “like me.”¹¹

We can also share such historical stories. We can share historical examples of donors to Christian causes. (Books like John Rinehart’s Gospel Patrons provide many great examples.)

In my fundraising trainings, I often talk about gifts in wills. There are many effective ways to ask for a gift in a will. But for some people, it’s just too scary. For them, I suggest the softest, simplest, easiest approach. I like to call it the “4-S” method. That’s three Stoories and Shut up.¹²

What does this sound like? Suppose I was meeting with a university alumnus. At some point, I’ll give an update on the university. I might mention a new coach. (Story 1). Then, I might mention a new building. (Story 2). Then, I might say,

“Oh, and Jon Smith did a neat thing. Did you know Jon? He graduated two years before you. No? Well, Jon spent his career helping other people get their finances

in order. And he recently signed a new will that one day will endow a permanent scholarship for our financial planning students!”

And then, I take a drink. Silence. I wait for a response.

If the donor wants to discuss estate giving, he can do so. And that’s great. If not, he’ll mention something about the other two stories. And that’s fine, too. Either way, I’ve done something powerful. I’ve shared a donor story. I’ve shared an estate-giving story. I’ve shared a story about someone like the donor.¹³ I’ve helped the donor to feel that

“People like us enjoy making gifts like this.”

Social norms in joyful giving stories: Ancient and modern

In 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, Paul starts his fundraising appeal with a donor story. He gives an example of the Macedonians giving. His example is aspirational. It’s an example of massively generous giving. They gave “beyond their ability.” His example is also joyful. Far from a grudging gift,

“They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.” (2 Corinthians 8:4 NLT).

Paul’s example sets a norm of giving much. It also sets a norm of giving joyfully. This, too, matches modern experimental research. It’s not enough to say what others do. It’s important to say that they like to do it.

In the previous experiment, one phrase more than tripled charitable gifts in wills. The phrase was,

“Many of our customers like to leave money to charity in their will ...” (Emphasis added.)

This “like to” part matters. In another experiment, I also asked about gifts in wills. The first finding wasn’t a surprise. Interest went up dramatically if the question started with

“Many people like to leave a gift to charity in their will because they want to continue to support causes that are important in their lives.”¹⁴

The social norm increased interest. That’s no surprise.

But the next result was a surprise. Removing “like to” from this phrase erased its positive effect. It wasn’t enough that others make these gifts. It’s important that they “like to” make these gifts.

Both parts of Paul’s donor story are important. It’s not enough to say that they gave generously. They need to have enjoyed doing it!

Problems with social norm stories: Are these people like you?

Donor stories work. If. Donor stories work if they connect with the listener’s identity. It’s not enough to have an example. The donor must feel that the example is like them. The message is not simply

“Other people make gifts like this.”

The message is

“People like us enjoy making gifts like this.”

The example must connect with the donor’s identity. It must be, in some meaningful way, like them.

In one experiment, people read about a complex charitable gift.¹⁵ Some read about what they could do. This

started with,

“You make a gift and ...”

Others got identical information as a donor story. This started,

“Sara made a gift and ...”

Those who read about Sara were more willing to make the gift. The example of another donor was more influential. The donor story worked. But.

But this effect could disappear. In some cases, the story also included a picture of Sara. Sometimes, Sara was pictured as an older person. Sometimes, she was middle-aged. Sometimes, she was much younger. If the picture was close in age to the reader, the story worked better. Gift intentions increased more than with the text alone. If the picture wasn't age matched, the story didn't work. Gift intentions decreased.

This result was not just about age matching. Statistically, interest in the gift was predicted by one question:

“How much do you identify with Sara? She is [___ a lot ___ somewhat ___ a little bit ___ not really ___ not at all] like me.”

It wasn't enough to give an example. It had to be an example that the donor felt was like them. It's not enough that other people make these gifts. These need to be people like us.

Another experiment found a similar result. It used a pledge drive for a public radio station.¹⁶ New members calling in were told,

“We had another member; he [/she] contributed \$240.”

This \$240 example was larger than the typical gift.

The experiment was this. The reference to “he” or “she” alternated randomly. If it matched the caller’s gender, gifts averaged a third larger than when it did not.

Again, it wasn’t just about having an example from another person. It was about having an example that the donor felt was like them. It’s not enough that other people make these gifts. These need to be people like us.

Another experiment found a similar result with gifts in wills. Stories of living donors worked better than identical stories of deceased donors.¹⁷ Living donor examples are more like the living donor audience.

All of these results tell the same story. A female example is more like a female donor. It works better than a male example for that donor. A younger-person example is more like a younger donor. It works better than an older-person example for that donor. A living-person example is more like the living donor. It works better than a deceased-person example.

It’s not enough just to have an example of another person. To work, it must be an example of someone like the donor. The example must connect with the donor’s identity. It must show that

“People like us enjoy making gifts like this.”

People like us: Who inspired you?

We can use examples of others to inspire the donor’s generosity. So, what’s the most compelling example for our donor? We don’t have to guess. We can just ask.

The best fundraisers often do this. For example, they

may ask,

- “Can you tell me a bit more about who taught you to be generous or where your generous spirit comes from?”¹⁸
- “When you were young, was there anyone whom you considered a role model for giving?”¹⁹
- “Who are your philanthropic role models?”²⁰
- “Where did you learn to give?”²¹
- “How did you learn to be generous?”²²

This fundraising begins with the donor’s identity. It begins with their people, values, and life history. It shows how these motivate the donor’s generosity. In fact, it does something even better. It gets the donor to tell this story. It gets the donor to make the case for their own generous giving.

This is “us”: Building up the modern donor community

We don’t want donors to feel alone in their giving decision. We want them to feel part of a community. It’s a community that has made that same decision to give. We want them to feel part of a donor community.

There are many ways to build this sense of a donor community. We can share donor stories. We can share stories in person, in print, and online. We can share stories of others who are like the donor.

We can host campaign dinners. There, others can describe what motivated their own commitments. We can, like Paul, stir up generosity by comparing groups. Schools often publish alumni giving participation rates from different classes. Churches can publish these for different small groups.²³

We can share inspirational stories of lower-wealth donors. We can share aspirational stories of higher-wealth donors.²⁴ We can mention motivational lead gifts that set the standard for others.

Building a donor community helps inspire sharing. It can also help to recruit new donors. When Naomi Levine joined NYU, it was near bankruptcy. It raised only about \$20 million per year. Under her leadership, NYU completed the nation's first billion-dollar fundraising campaign.²⁵ How did she grow such a large donor base from such a low starting point?

Her process began by meeting with a prospect, usually at breakfast. But here was the key. The fundraiser almost never went alone. Levine explains,

“if a person was in real estate, we would discuss what real estate person should meet with him. If he was in insurance or finance, we would think of people who we felt were his peers and someone that he would respect. During the twenty years that Larry Tisch [billionaire owner of CBS television] was chairman, he joined most of those meetings.”²⁶

From the very beginning, the prospect was surrounded by other donors. These donors were already in the prospect's social or business world. She also brought along a famous person who supported the cause.

These people created an inspirational – and aspirational – community of fellow donors. They demonstrated to the prospect that

“People like us enjoy doing things like this.”

This is “us”: Building up the ancient donor community

Paul wrote a fundraising appeal letter to the Corinthians. But he didn't just write a letter. He sent a fundraiser. He writes,

“So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving.” (2 Corinthians 8:6 NLT).

And did Paul send the fundraiser by himself? No. He sent someone famous with him. Paul writes,

“We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches;” (2 Corinthians 8:18).

Building donor community continued throughout Paul's ongoing fundraising process. He responds to the Philippians gift with a compelling thank you note. But he didn't just write a letter. He also sent Timothy.

And did Paul send Timothy alone? No. He also sent someone well known to the donors. He sent Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus had worked in the ministry with Paul. Epaphroditus was a member of their congregation. He was one of them.

Paul liked to send the fundraiser along with a well-known peer or a famous person. This worked in ancient fundraising. It works in modern fundraising, too.

Join “us”: Inviting prospects into the modern donor community

In Naomi Levine's fundraising process, inviting someone into the donor community started with the first meeting. This

meeting included a supporter from the donor's own social or business community. It also included a famous donor.

That meeting had a goal. The goal was not to get a gift. The goal was to start a relationship. How? The first step was to uncover the prospect's connections or interests with different university programs.

The next step was to schedule a campus visit. At this campus visit, the prospect would

- Take a tour.
- Have lunch with the president.
- Visit with faculty in areas of interest.

The next step was to involve the prospect in their areas of interest. Levine explains,

“If there was going to be a concert or film festival at the Tisch School of the Arts, we would invite them to that. If there was a seminar at the Law School, we would invite them to that. If we had an advisory committee on filmmaking, we would, if appropriate, invite them to sit on that committee.”

This process invited prospects into a fellow-donor community. It socially connected them with a particular area of interest. Eventually, it would lead to a request. That request would connect with the donor's specific interests and involvement. But the process didn't start there. It started with the donor community. It started by showing that

“People like us enjoy doing things like this.”

Conclusion: People like us enjoy making gifts like this

The message in this passage inspires generosity. It begins with the wealthy person's backstory. It begins with

- Who they are
- Who they have been
- Who they are in the ongoing process of being

It begins with their identity.

It then moves to "us." It moves to the donor community. Sharing generously is what we all do. We all, together, share from what God has richly blessed us with. This uses the powerful social norm of generous fellow-donors.

We can deliver this same message. We can make statements. We can share stories. We can ask questions. We can build donor communities.

However we do it, the message is always the same. It's one of the most powerful messages in all of major gift fundraising. That message is this:

"People like us enjoy making gifts like this."

¹ The full sentence was, “Many of our customers like to leave money to charity in their will. Are there any causes you’re passionate about?” However, in subsequent testing, I found that only the first part increased bequest-giving intentions. Thus, I exclude the second part here to emphasize the social norm statement only. Quoted from Cabinet Office. (2013). *Applying behavioral insights to charitable giving*. Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team. p. 22-23. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/203286/BIT_Charitable_Giving_Paper.pdf

² Aleman, M. (2011, October). *Harness the power of your phone center to increase planned gifts*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, San Antonio, TX. p. 4.

³ Melvin, A. T. (2014, October). *The art (and science) of persuasion*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference for Philanthropic Planning, Anaheim, CA. p. 9.

⁴ Shuba, J. J. (2020, October). *Navigating planned gift conversations with your donors*. [Paper presentation]. National Charitable Gift Planners Conference. p. 2.

⁵ Acts 4:36-37

⁶ Mark 14:5; John 12:3

⁷ Acts 2:45 “property [ktēmata] and possessions [hyparxeis]”; Acts 4:34 “land [chōriōn] or houses [oikiōn]”; Acts 4:37 “a tract of land [agrou]”

⁸ For some great ones, see <https://generousgiving.org/videos/>

⁹ <http://www.clairegaurdiani.com/Writings/Pages/HowToUseGreaterGood.aspx>

Her book, *The Greater Good*, is a collection of heroically-framed donor stories from American History. She recommends that fundraisers use the book in this way: “Need a GREAT STORY to illustrate your message about the importance of philanthropy? Tell a group of volunteers/smaller donors about the success of the Mother’s March of Dimes or the creation of Provident Hospital. Show how the vision of a major donor can transform an institution (Mary Garrett at Johns Hopkins) or an entire city (Ken Dayton in Minneapolis). Demonstrate how risk-taking is essential for real social and economic progress (Guggenheim support to the aviation industry). Connect your philanthropic effort with the American entrepreneurial spirit (John Winthrop’s Sermon on the ‘Arabella’).”

¹⁰ Author’s notes from Guadiani, C. (Oct. 17, 2018). *Luncheon keynote*, Charitable Gift Planners Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

¹¹ One study finds this identification with such “moral and civic virtue exemplars” to be a powerful predictor of pro-social action (giving and volunteering) among adolescents as well. The researchers explain, “Adolescents who have made a habit of social action (having participated in the previous 12 months and intending to participate again in future) are more likely to ... identify themselves more closely with moral and civic virtue exemplars, and say that other people who know them also think they are more like the moral and civic virtue exemplars;” Taylor-Collins, E., Harrison, T., Thoma, S. J., & Moller, F. (2019). A habit of social action: Understanding the factors associated with adolescents who have made a habit of helping others. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(1), 98-114.

¹² This suggestion originated from Jeff Comfort, Vice President, Principal Gifts and Gift Planning, Oregon State University. Comfort, J. (2014, May 29). *Lessons learned*.

[Conference presentation]. Western Regional Planned Giving Conference. Costa Mesa, CA.

¹³ If they aren't fellow graduates, I can mention another similarity. It might be simply, "You remind me of him. You both care about many of the same things."

¹⁴ James, R. N. (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27, 998-1011.

¹⁵ James, R. N., III. (2019). Using donor images in marketing complex charitable financial planning instruments: An experimental test with charitable gift annuities. *Journal of Personal Finance*. 18(1), 65-74.

¹⁶ Shang, J., Reed, A., & Croson, R. (2008). Identity congruency effects on donations. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45(3), 351-361.

¹⁷ James III, R. N., & Routley, C. (2016). We the living: The effects of living and deceased donor stories on charitable bequest giving intentions. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 21(2), 109-117.

¹⁸ Green, F., Wagg, H. & Field, C. (2019). *You can't take it with you: The art and science of legacy fundraising*. Independently published. p. 106.

¹⁹ Steenhuisen, J. (2012, October). *Philanthropy planning: What to say and do in the room with your donors/clients to explore and document their philanthropy mission*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, New Orleans, LA. p. 7.

²⁰ Eskin, J. (2019). *10 Simple Fundraising Lessons: A common sense guide to overcoming your fear of asking for gifts*. Eskin Fundraising Training, LLC. p. 39.

²¹ Stroman, M. K. (2014). *Asking about asking: Mastering the art of conversational fundraising* (2nd ed.). CharityChannel Press. p. 148.

²² Stroman, M. K. (2014). *Asking about asking: Mastering the art of conversational fundraising* (2nd ed.). CharityChannel Press. p. 148.

²³ Rocchio, D. (March 7, 2024). *Oh, the places we will go: Behavioral economics, KPIs, and storytelling in stewardship*. [Presentation]. Episcopal Parish Network, Houston, TX.

²⁴ People often take their cues from such aspirational leaders. Gifts from well-known leaders are influential. Large lead gifts are powerful in experimental research and fundraising practice.

²⁵ Levine, N. B. (2019). *From bankruptcy to billions: Fundraising the Naomi Levine way*. Independently published.

²⁶ Levine, N. B. (2019). *From bankruptcy to billions: Fundraising the Naomi Levine way*. Independently published. p. 124.

Chapter 6

Message 4: Giving is more enjoyable because everything comes from God!

- *Biblical fundraising focuses on the past, present, and future story of the donor's wealth.*
- *Ordinary fundraising focuses only on the charity's story.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on **God, who richly supplies us with all things** for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

ORIGIN REMINDERS BUILD GRATITUDE

Triggering gratitude

Gratitude is great. Modern research shows that gratitude increases happiness, peace, and well-being.¹ It also increases giving and other altruistic actions.² It makes giving more enjoyable. So, how do we trigger gratitude?

Commands may not work.³ Many frustrated parents have learned this. It's tempting to say to a child,

"Quit complaining! You should be grateful!"

But I doubt you've ever heard a child respond with

"Yes, you are right. I don't know what I was thinking. I *should* be grateful! Thank you for that reminder."

So, when the direct command doesn't work, what does? Modern research has a clear answer. Gratitude is triggered by

recalling good things that have happened to us.⁴ It's further strengthened by recalling those who provided us with the good things.⁵

These create gratitude. The effect is scientifically reliable. It's highly replicated.⁶ So, too, is its effect on charitable giving. Increased gratitude results in increased generosity and giving.⁷ It makes giving more attractive.

Gratitude from donors

Reminding people of good things that have happened to them triggers gratitude. Reminding them of the ones who provided those good things triggers even more gratitude.

1 Timothy 6:17 does both. Timothy is to remind rich Christians that they have set their hope on

“God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

The word for “supplies” describes an up-close-and-personal, ongoing process.⁸ God is in the up-close-and-personal, ongoing process of providing all things. He is providing life, family, friends, food, shelter, wealth, salvation, and everything else. Recognizing God as this ongoing source results in gratitude.

Gratitude is important in fundraising. This is true for gratitude to the donors from recipients. It's also true for gratitude from the donors as recipients. In both cases, good gratitude does two things. It confirms relationship and impact. Good gratitude confirms a reciprocal relationship. The receiver desires to make the giver happy. It also confirms the gift's impact. The gift made a difference for the recipient. We see both concepts in this passage.

The donors' gifts are expressions of a relationship with God. They are reciprocal responses to God's rich provision. They express a personal, emotionally bonded, ongoing relationship of mutual reciprocity.

The donors' gifts are also expressions of a relationship with God's church. This is not just giving away. It's sharing together. The word for "share" in this passage is *koinōnikous*. This is mutual sharing within an emotionally bonded, fellowship community.

God's rich provision makes an impact on the donors. They, in turn, use it to make the kind of impact that pleases God. They put it to work. (In Greek, work is *ergon*.) Donors use it to do intrinsically good work [*agatho-ergein*]. They use it to be rich in beautifully good works [*ergois kalois*].

They act as the good steward who takes the gold or silver talent God provided and

"immediately went and did business [*ērgasato*] with them, and earned five more talents." (Matthew 25:16).

They do not act as the bad steward, who reports,

"And I was afraid, so I went away and hid your talent in the ground." (Matthew 25:25).

They do not respond to God's provision by saying,

"Master, here is your mina, which I kept tucked away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid" (Luke 19:20b-21a).

Donors are supposed to generate the returns the master desires. They put it to work. They produce good works. They produce so many good works they become rich in them. They create impact. They do this as an expression of relationship reciprocity with God.

Gratitude from major donors

Paying it back by helping others fits with scripture. But does this notion have any place in our modern, secular world? Is gratitude from donors actually relevant for wealth sharing? It is.

A 2021 study looked at the biggest gifts from the wealthiest donors. It analyzed letters from billionaires pledging to give away at least half of their wealth. The analysis found that

“The majority of letters express a social–normative rationale, consisting of two prevailing explanations:

- (1) An expressed gratitude and desire to ‘give back’ and
- (2) references to family upbringing as a socializing force”⁹

Two primary motivations drove these largest gifts from the wealthiest donors. These were gratitude and personal backstory. Donors wanted to “give back.” This is gratitude. They were also motivated by their life history and values. This is their backstory. These are the modern motivations for the largest gifts of wealth. These are the same motivations used in 1 Timothy 6:17.

Paul begins with the donor’s backstory – their life history and values. They are in the already-in-progress state of being not conceited or above the fellowship community. They have, already in the past, put their hope in God, not in wealth.

Paul continues with gratitude reminders. He reminds them of the good things they have received. He reminds them of the One who provided these good things.

Paul opens with donor backstory and donor gratitude. These were powerful in the first century. They remain powerful today.

Gratitude for what?

Recalling the good things that have happened to us triggers gratitude. Recalling the ones who made them happen increases it even further. But does it matter what kind of good things we bring to mind?

1 Timothy 6:17-19 is all about wealth and wealth sharing. So, we might expect Paul to remind donors that their money comes from God. It would be natural to say,

“You’re rich. God has given you so much money! You should be grateful and share your money!”

But Paul doesn’t do this. Instead, he reminds them of

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.”

His reminder is about the source of all good things, not just money.

Does this matter? In one experiment we tested a similar idea. The first group was instructed to

“remember and list three good things that have happened in your day and reflect on what caused them.”¹⁰

The second group received a slightly different instruction. The phrase “good things” was changed to “good financial things.”

In the same way, the first group recalled good things

“related to any area of your life such as relationships, work, school, leisure, physical and mental health,

spirituality, money, daily living, transportation, and so forth.”

The second group instead recalled good financial things

“related to any area of your financial life such as spending, savings, budgeting, planning, giving, investing, daily financial transactions, thoughts/feelings about money, conversations with others about money, earning money, and so forth.”

So, what happened? For those reminded of good things “related to any area of your life,” donation intentions rose. For those reminded only of good financial things, donation intentions fell. The effect on generosity didn’t just disappear. It reversed.

Reminders of all good things, even including financial ones, worked. Reminders of only financial good things backfired.¹¹ Gratitude just for having money does not encourage sharing money. Instead, it highlights the attractiveness of having money. It encourages holding, not sharing.

Paul’s precise language works. He describes God’s rich provision to donors in many places. But these are never just financial benefits. These are the benefits from all things.

In his message to rich donors, Paul points to

“God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

In his own appeal for donations, he writes,

“God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work ... You will be enriched in every way so

that you can be generous on every occasion,” (2 Corinthians 9:8, 11a NIV).

In his response to receiving a donation, Paul writes,

“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches” (Philippians 4:19a).

The rich are not to be grateful just for having wealth. Were they to spend it, lose it, or give it away, they would then lose their reason for gratitude. Instead, they are to be grateful for receiving all things.

The necessity of repetition in gratitude

Paul tells Timothy to “instruct [*parangelle*]”. This verb is a present imperative. It describes something to be done repeatedly. One commentary explains,

“The present tense here suggests a long term policy: Timothy was not merely to ‘tell them’ and the matter would be ended. He had to keep on telling them.”¹²

So, what does modern research say? Is it important to “keep on telling them”? As mentioned earlier, we tested the “Three Good Things” gratitude reminder. This increased giving intentions. We tested this for seven different charities representing seven different causes.¹³ It worked for all of them.

But the experiment didn’t stop there. We then had people do this same “Three Good Things” task each of the next seven days. Willingness to donate grew even more. It peaked right around day six or seven.

And then, we stopped. We stopped giving the gratitude reminders. Just one day later, the effect had disappeared. Willingness to donate dropped back to the level of those who had never received gratitude reminders. We tested both groups

again 30 days later. The result was still the same. The difference had disappeared.

Gratitude reminders worked. They increased giving intentions. As long as we kept using gratitude reminders, they kept working. But when we stopped using them, the effect disappeared. A gratitude reminder created a change, but the effect was temporary.

Other experiments show similar results. For example, reminders of God or spiritual things increase giving to others.¹⁴ But this effect is temporary. In another study, more religious people were more likely to support charity. Further analysis gave the rest of the story. This difference arose only on days when they had visited their place of worship.¹⁵ Without that recent reminder, religious people gave no differently than others.

The impact of such reminders is positive but temporary. This is true for reminders of moral values in general, not just religious ones. Reminders bring the values to the top of the mind.¹⁶ This, in turn, increases actions, such as giving, that match those values. Without these reminders, the values fade from attention. The behavior change disappears.

The necessity of repetition in fundraising ministry

What does all this mean for fundraising? It means it's probably a good idea to follow Peter's example and

“always remind you about these things—even though you already know them” (2 Peter 1:12b NLT).

It's good to tell them. It's better to “keep on telling them.”¹⁷

Our passage directs Timothy to instruct the rich. He is to instruct them that they have not (perfect tense)

“set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who richly provides us with all things” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

They already know these things. The perfect tense tells us they have already done these things. The idea is not new for them. The information is not new for them.

So why tell them? Why remind someone of something they already know? Because reminders are powerful. The power of such reminders isn't about learning something new. It's about acting in a way that matches what we already know to be true. Delivering this message is powerful. Delivering it repeatedly is even more powerful.

Triggering gratitude is not a one-time process. These are not single-use messages. These reminders must be repeated. The messages are powerful. They're powerful as part of an ongoing ministry relationship. They're powerful when they're repeated. This is what worked 2,000 years ago. It's what still works today.

PART II

THE END OF THE BEGINNING OF THE STORY

Backstory and setting

This passage is structured as a story. It has a main character – the rich Christian. It progresses through the backstory, setting, call to adventure, climax, and resolution. The backstory and setting sections end here. Next comes the call to act. This will be the main character’s challenge to do something.

Each story step is connected. The backstory and setting are not just random details. They establish the motivation to accept the call to adventure. They show why the main character will say yes to the challenge.

In an interesting story, the call to adventure will be big. It will be at – or seemingly beyond – the capacity of the main character. Yet, accepting this challenge will seem reasonable at that point. The lead-up to this call to adventure will make it feel reasonable.

The backstory and setting make the extreme choice feel appropriate. They do so by establishing identity and reframing cost.

- Establishing identity: The main character must accept the challenge because of who he is. This identity comes from his people, values, and life story. His identity compels him to act. Saying yes reflects the kind of person he is.

- Reframing cost: The challenge will be extreme. It will be costly or risky. Yet, at the point of decision, the circumstances will make the choice feel appropriate. The alternatives won't be as attractive. The cost won't feel as extreme. The extreme choice will become a reasonable choice.

Our passage follows these same steps. It makes a challenge. It's an extreme challenge. It's not just a challenge to share; it's a challenge to share generously. It's not just a call to do good works; it's a call to be rich in good works. It's not just a challenge about income sharing; it's a challenge about wealth sharing. The backstory and setting motivate saying yes to this extreme challenge. They do so by establishing identity and reframing cost.

Backstory and setting: Social identity

This passage starts with the donor's backstory. It starts with his social and spiritual identity. These will compel him to accept the challenge. They will compel him to share generously.

The social connection backstory

His social identity is not being conceited or "high-minded." He is not disconnected from the fellowship community. He is in this already-in-progress, continuing process (Greek present tense). He is already being this person.

This connection to the fellowship community leads to sharing. He is a member of the group. He cares about the group. This compels him to share with the group.

The social example backstory

The rich Christian shares. He is not alone in his sharing. He is following the group's mutual social norm:

“God ... richly supplies us with all things to enjoy: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

The rich person is sharing what God has richly supplied. But so are all of “us.” His sharing matches what everyone else in the group is doing. It matches the social norm. It takes place among others who are doing the same.

Backstory and setting: Spiritual identity

The personal backstory

The rich person's spiritual identity also compels him to accept the challenge. What do we know of this identity? We know he has placed his trust in God, not in riches.

This is not new. It's been going on for a while. He is experiencing the present results of this past action (Greek perfect tense). Trusting in God is part of his life story. Not trusting in the uncertainty of riches is too.

The partnership backstory

The rich Christian relies on his partnership with God, not his riches. God is fulfilling His part of the partnership. God is in the ongoing process of richly supplying him with all things (Greek present tense). This, too, is part of the donor's life story. God has richly supplied him in the past. God is richly supplying him now. God will richly supply him in the future.

God is the good partner. God gives first and trusts the partner. If the rich Christian refused to respond to God's generosity with his own, he would be violating partnership

values. He would be putting his trust in riches, not in God. He would be acting contrary to his own identity.

The godliness imitation backstory

Recognizing that God richly provides all things redefines the act of giving in another way. Giving is what God does.¹⁸ Giving follows God's example. Thus, giving becomes a form of godliness. It's a form of imitating God. One commenter notes,

“Following this paradigm, rich people need to be generous and rich in giving, imitating the model given by God (6:18).”¹⁹

The origin of the donor's spiritual backstory

These spiritual backstory elements start with God's rich provision. Because God richly provides, giving is an act of partnership. Giving fulfills partnership values. Because God richly provides, giving is an act of imitation. It is a form of godliness. Because God richly provides, giving is an act of gratitude. It is giving as thanksgiving.

If the rich person did not respond to God's provision, it would contradict his backstory. It would contradict his identity. It would show him to be a disconnected, self-focused, money-trusting, God-ignoring, ungrateful, precarious wealth holder. This is not the rich Christian's identity. It does not match his values, his people, or his life story. It's not who he is. Thus, his identity compels him to give. It compels him to accept the challenge.

Backstory and setting: Reframing cost

In a compelling story, the main character will face a call to act. This call will not be easy, small, or mundane. It will be a call to adventure. It will involve extreme cost or high risk. It will be a real challenge.

However, the lead-up to accepting this call to adventure will reframe the cost. Given the circumstances, accepting the extreme challenge will appear more reasonable. Those circumstances reframe the relative cost of accepting the challenge.

This passage does exactly that. It reframes the cost of accepting the challenge. It reframes the cost of making a large gift. It does so in many ways.

Reframing cost: It's wealth not income

A major gift is, of course, big. This passage is about giving big. But it also reframes the cost of the large gift. It does so first with the setting.

This story is not set in the land of income tithing. It's not set in the land of almsgiving. It's set in the land of wealth and wealth sharing. For the wealthy person, this creates a big reference point. A big reference point makes a large gift feel reasonable.

Suppose a person has savings of \$1 million and an income of \$100,000. This is an income of \$8,333 per month. Perhaps 90% is dedicated to normal living expenses in a healthy situation. This leaves \$833 per month of disposable income. This is about \$28 per day.

Using this \$28 daily reference point, what size of gift seems reasonable? \$5? Maybe even \$10? Certainly not \$100,000! That seems crazy. It doesn't fit. It doesn't fit because the reference point is too small.

Notice how this changes when we start talking about wealth. This person has \$1 million in savings. Using that as a reference point, what size of gift seems reasonable? The \$5 or

\$10 gift no longer fits. The \$100,000 gift no longer seems quite so crazy. The large reference point makes the large gift more plausible.

In this passage, the giving story is set in the land of wealth. In Greek, it's a single sentence that references wealth seven times. It's blunt. It's obvious. It's about wealth. This wealth setting reframes the cost of the large gift. It makes accepting the challenge feel more reasonable.

Reframing cost: It's only temporary wealth

This passage is not set just in the land of wealth. It's set in the land of temporary wealth. Paul brings this to mind with several arguments:

1. You can't take it with you when you die.
2. You're rich, but only right now at this critical moment.
3. Your wealth is uncertain (disappearing).

Wealth is temporary. This makes sharing it less painful. It's going to disappear at some point anyway. So, the donor isn't giving up that much. This reframes the cost of the large gift. It makes accepting the challenge feel more reasonable.

Reframing cost: Re-gifting from a windfall

A dollar is a dollar. But when the dollar comes easily, it's easier to give. The source of the dollar changes how painful the gift feels. In experiments, people are more generous with "windfall" money than with regular earned income.²⁰

The same idea applies here. What the rich Christians have was generously supplied to them. It came from God. They are giving what was given to them. That makes giving easier.

This reframes the cost of the large gift. It makes accepting the challenge feel more reasonable.

Reframing cost: There's more where that came from

The rich Christians have not set their hope on wealth. They have set their hope on God. God is the one who richly supplies all things. This is the source. This source is reliable. That means it isn't necessary to hold every penny tightly. It isn't necessary to rely on the uncertainty of riches.

Giving isn't stressful because the source of our rich provision is still there. God will provide. He's done it in the past. He's doing it right now. He'll do it in the future. We're connected to this source of all things.²¹ (In fact, through giving, we become even more connected!)

Wealth is not just a fixed pool. It's from a flowing river. Gifting isn't as painful because there will be more where that came from. This reframes the cost of the large gift. It makes accepting the challenge feel more reasonable.

Reframing cost: I'm just the manager

Giving as an appointed manager isn't painful. We're not giving up that much. It's not our money, anyway. We're simply managing it. We're managing it according to the instructions of the one who provided it.

The story of wealth in this passage is the story of stewardship. It was richly provided by God. We don't get to keep it. God left instructions on what to do with it. (He left instructions on how to enjoy it!) We will eventually have to report how we used it.

Giving isn't painful because we aren't giving up much. We're just the appointed manager following the owner's instructions. This reframes the cost of the large gift. It makes accepting the challenge feel more reasonable.

Reframing cost: What's the alternative?

Making a big gift is a big challenge. Or is it? That depends on the alternative. What is the alternative to giving?

The rich have more than they will likely need for normal living. They have extra. So, what are their options? This passage gives two.

1. Wrong choice: Bury your wealth to be lost by misfortune or death.
2. Right choice: Enjoy your wealth by putting it to work (doing good, becoming rich in good works, being generous and ready to share).

What, exactly, are the wealthy giving up by being generous? They have more than enough. So, they're not going to use it for their basic needs. Also, they're unlikely to waste it in wild living. If that were their nature, they would never have become, or stayed, wealthy.

What they are giving up is burying it in the ground. What they are giving up is dying with it. And that's the best-case scenario! Often, even burying it will go wrong. A thief may break in and steal it. Moths and rust may cause it to decay. Crashing markets and inflation might do the same. A bad investment may wipe it out entirely. Then, they wouldn't die with it after all. Instead, they would suffer through that painful loss experience before they die.

Giving isn't painful because they aren't giving up that much. The unattractive alternatives reframe the cost of making the large gift. They make accepting the challenge feel more reasonable.

Backstory and setting: Reframing cost

The call to adventure is a big challenge. Giving in this passage is giving big. It's generously sharing wealth. It's being rich in good works. But a big gift doesn't have to feel painful.

Giving costs. How much it costs is a matter of numbers. But how painful that cost feels is not just numbers. It's also framing. This passage reframes the cost of the big gift in many ways. Saying yes becomes a reasonable choice. It's reasonable given

- The large reference point for the gift
- The temporary nature of the donor's wealth
- The source of the donor's wealth
- The source of the donor's future provision
- The donor's role in managing the wealth
- The unattractive alternatives to sharing generously

It's a big challenge. But at the point of decision, the big challenge feels reasonable. It feels reasonable because of the backstory and setting.

The end of backstory and setting

This passage is structured as a story. A story progresses through the backstory, setting, call to adventure, climax, and resolution. This section ends the message's backstory and setting. These show why the donor must accept the challenge.

They show why his identity compels him to do so. They reframe the cost of the challenge as being reasonable. They lead up to the call to adventure – the challenge. They motivate accepting that challenge. Next comes the challenge itself.

¹ See, e.g., Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: an experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*(2), 377-389; Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, *60*(5), 410-421.

² See, e.g., Bartlett, M. Y., & DeSteno, D. (2006). Gratitude and prosocial behavior: Helping when it costs you. *Psychological Science*, *17*(4), 319-325; DeSteno, D., Bartlett, M. Y., Baumann, J., Williams, L. A., & Dickens, L. (2010). Gratitude as moral sentiment: emotion-guided cooperation in economic exchange. *Emotion*, *10*(2), 289-293; Karns, C. M., Moore III, W. E., & Mayr, U. (2017). The cultivation of pure altruism via gratitude: a functional MRI study of change with gratitude practice. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *11*, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2017.00599>; Komter, A. E. (2004). Gratitude and gift exchange. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude*. Oxford University Press, 195-212; Walker, J., Kumar, A., & Gilovich, T. (2016). Cultivating gratitude and giving through experiential consumption. *Emotion*, *16*(8), 1126-1136.

³ Although perhaps less powerful, even simple reminders may still help. In one study, a reminder to “be grateful for what you have” increased both the tendency to make donations and the size of those donations. [Paramita, W., Septianto, F., & Tjiptono, F. (2020). The distinct effects of gratitude and pride on donation choice and amount. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *53*, 101972, 1-10. p. 4.]

⁴ Such interventions can go by various names. For example, “Grateful self-reflection” is where “Participants were asked weekly to record three good things that had occurred.” “Counting blessings” is where “participants listed weekly up to five things they were grateful for.” In the “Three Good Things” intervention, participants “write down each day three good things that had happened to them over the course of one week and attribute causes to these positive events.” [Lomas, T., Froh, J. J., Emmons, R. A., Mishra, A., & Bono, G. (2014). Gratitude interventions: A review and future agenda. In A. C. Parks & S. M. Schueller (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell handbook of positive psychological interventions* (1-19), John Wiley & Sons. p. 8.]

⁵ In the “Gratitude Visit,” people are asked to write a letter to someone they are grateful to and hand it to them. The task resulted in “large gains in happiness and reductions in depression up to one month later.” A psychology textbook explains, “To date, the Gratitude Visit remains the most powerful positive psychology intervention in terms of degree of change.” [Lomas, T., Froh, J. J., Emmons, R. A., Mishra, A., & Bono, G. (2014). Gratitude interventions: A review and future agenda. In A. C. Parks & S. M. Schueller (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell handbook of positive psychological interventions* (1-19), John Wiley & Sons. p. 6-7.]

⁶ Diniz, G., Korke, L., Tristão, L. S., Pelegrini, R., Bellodi, P. L., & Bernardo, W. M. (2023). The effects of gratitude interventions: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Einstein (São Paulo)*, *21*, eRW0371. https://doi.org/10.31744/einstein_journal/2023RW0371

⁷ See, e.g., Bock, D. E., Eastman, J. K., & Eastman, K. L. (2018). Encouraging consumer charitable behavior: The impact of charitable motivations, gratitude, and materialism. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *150*(4), 1213-1228; Liu, C. J., & Hao, F. (2017). Reciprocity belief and gratitude as moderators of the association between social status and charitable giving. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *111*, 46-50; Liu, Y. & James, R. N., III. (2023). Gratitude, finance, and financial gratitude in

charitable giving: A repeated experiment over time. *Financial Services Review*, 31, 23-34.

⁸ For details, see, "God the provider," Chapter 6-I in *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.

⁹ Schmitz, H. P., Mitchell, G. E., & McCollim, E. M. (2021). How billionaires explain their philanthropy: A mixed-method analysis of the giving pledge letters. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 32, 512-523. p. 512.

¹⁰ Liu, Y. & James, R. N., III. (2023). Gratitude, finance, and financial gratitude in charitable giving: A repeated experiment over time. *Financial Services Review*, 31, 23-34.

¹¹ We see similar results across other experiments. Money reminders decrease generosity. [Roberts, J. A., & Roberts, C. R. (2012). Money matters: Does the symbolic presence of money affect charitable giving and attitudes among adolescents? *Young Consumers*, 13(4), 329-336; Vohs, K. D., Mead, N. L., & Goode, M. R. (2006). The psychological consequences of money. *Science*, 314(5802), 1154-1156; Vohs, K. D., Mead, N. L., & Goode, M. R. (2008). Merely activating the concept of money changes personal and interpersonal behavior. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(3), 208-212.] Describing gifts using more financial, legal, or contractual language discourages sharing. [James, R. N., III. (2018). Describing complex charitable giving instruments: Experimental tests of technical finance terms and tax benefits. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 28(4), 437-452; James, R. N., III. (2018). Creating understanding and interest in charitable financial planning and estate planning: An experimental test of introductory phrases. *Journal of Personal Finance*, 17(2), 9-22.]

¹² Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 121.

¹³ The Nature Conservancy, The American Humane Association, The American Red Cross, Breast Cancer Research Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, A Local Animal Shelter, and The Salvation Army

¹⁴ See, e.g., Guéguen, N., Bougeard-Delfosse, C., & Jacob, C. (2015). The positive effect of the mere presence of a religious symbol on compliance with an organ donation request. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 21(2), 92-99; Shariff, A. F., & Norenzayan, A. (2007). God is watching you: Priming God concepts increases prosocial behavior in an anonymous economic game. *Psychological Science*, 18(9), 803-809. Experiment 1.

¹⁵ Malhotra, D. (2010). "Sunday Effect" on pro-social behavior. *Judgment and Decision Making*, 5(2), 138-143.

¹⁶ Glasman, L. R., & Albarracín, D. (2006). Forming attitudes that predict future behavior: A meta-analysis of the attitude-behavior relation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(5), 778-822.

¹⁷ Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 121.

¹⁸ "This affirmation of God's generosity and open-handed giving is strikingly similar to the characterization of God as the one who 'gives to all generously and without grudging' in James 1:5." [Johnson, L. T. (1996). *Letters to Paul's delegates: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Trinity Press International. p. 207.]

¹⁹ Saarienen, R. (2008). *The Pastoral Epistles with Philemon & Jude*. Brazos Press. p. 112

²⁰ Arkes, H. R., Joyner, C. A., Pezzo, M. V., Nash, J. G., Siegel-Jacobs, K., & Stone, E. (1994). The psychology of windfall gains. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 59(3), 331-347; Konow, J. (2010). Mixed feelings: Theories of and evidence on giving. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(3-4), 279-297; Li, H., Liang, J., Xu, H., & Liu, Y. (2019). Does windfall money encourage charitable giving? An experimental study. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(4), 841-848; Reinstein, D., & Riener, G. (2012). Decomposing desert and tangibility effects in a charitable giving experiment. *Experimental Economics*, 15(1), 229-240.

Social norms can explain this behavioral difference. In experiments, “Perceptions of what most people would consider a morally appropriate donation depend on the amount of income and whether it is a windfall.” [Drouvelis, M., Isen, A. & Marx, B. (2019). *The bonus-income donation norm*. CESifo Working Paper No. 7961, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3498718>]

²¹ Chris Oyakhilome explains, “I’m a free-flowing conduit of God’s wealth and blessings to others, and I’m plugged into an unending supply.” Oyakhilome, C. (2020). *Rhapsody of realities*. LoveWorld Publishing. p. 59.

Story Elements

**The Call to
Adventure**
(Challenge)

Chapter 7

Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!

- *Biblical fundraising is about advising the donor to enjoy their wealth.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is about asking the donor to give away money.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things **for enjoyment**: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

WE HELP RICH PEOPLE ENJOY THEIR WEALTH

What's it for?

God richly provides all things including wealth. But why? What is it for? What is its purpose? This passage gives the answer. God gave it to us for enjoyment. The phrase "for enjoyment" is *eis* [for] *apolausin* [enjoyment]. Here,

"The construction *eis* plus the noun expresses purpose."¹

The purpose is enjoyment.²

The point of this passage is "for enjoyment." Both the words and the poetic structure confirm this.³ Everything before this phrase explains why wealth holders should enjoy their wealth. Everything after it explains how they can do so.

The word used for “enjoyment” here is extreme. It’s used only one other time in scripture:

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy [*apolausin*] the temporary pleasures of sin,” (Hebrews 11:24-25).

In Hebrews, this word describes the enjoyment of “the temporary pleasures of sin.” In 1 Timothy, it’s not sinful, but it’s still material, party-time enjoyment.⁴

Binge, bury, toil, or enjoy?

Being rich means accumulating more than enough for regular living. It’s far beyond the food, clothing, and shelter necessary for contentment. (1 Timothy 6:8). It’s extra. Once we’ve accumulated more than enough, what are our options? There are only four: binge, bury, toil, or enjoy. We can,

- BINGE on excess consumption and wild living.
- BURY the wealth and die with it.
- TOIL ceaselessly to stack up even more.
- ENJOY it (by using it to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share).

In this ministry, what is the ultimate challenge presented to the rich? What is it that we want them to do? If we say, “Give money,” then we might be missing the point. The point, the challenge, the call to adventure, is to enjoy the wealth.

Bingeing with it doesn’t lead to enjoyment. Burying it just to die with it doesn’t lead to enjoyment. Toiling ceaselessly to stack up more and more doesn’t lead to enjoyment.

Enjoyment comes from putting it to work to accomplish the results described in this passage.

Flip the donor script

Put yourself in a wealthy donor's shoes. Suppose you have extra. You have wealth. You have more than you'll likely consume. You'll leave behind an estate.

What feeling would you normally have walking into a fundraising office? Maybe something like this:

“Oh, no. Here comes the ask. I wonder how much they're going to hit me up for. Their wealth screening probably says that I'm loaded. This could get uncomfortable.”

The emotion is resistance. People often avoid being asked.⁵ Many who would give if asked still avoid being asked.⁶ It can be uncomfortable, costly, or both.

Now, let's flip the script. You, as a wealthy person, walk into a fundraising office. You see this banner on the wall. It reads,

“Mission Statement: We help rich people enjoy their wealth!”

Now, what feeling do you have? It's not resistance. It's not avoidance. Instead, it's curiosity. It's attraction. It leads to an obvious question: How?

That question allows for a discussion. It's a discussion of how to enjoy wealth. We can put it to work to accomplish real good in the world. We can become rich in beautifully good works. We can live the life of a good, joyfully generous abundance sharer. We can live the life of a deeply connected fellowship-community member, always ready to share at an

opportune moment. We can diversify our wealth by storing up treasure for our future.

This ministry of wealth enjoyment is scriptural. And it's different. It's different for the donor. It's also different for the fundraiser.

The wealth enjoyment minister

Of course, being a wealth enjoyment minister isn't how fundraisers usually see their work. Ask fundraisers about their work, and they'll tell you about the charity. They'll tell you about the cause. That's fine. But actually, that cause isn't their work.

Their work is not with the charity's beneficiaries. Their work is with the donors. Their ministry is not to the charity's beneficiaries. Their ministry is to the donors. And if they are in major gift fundraising, their ministry is, just as the passage says, "To the rich." It's a ministry to the wealthy. But it's more specific than that. It's the ministry of wealth enjoyment.⁷

What might that sound like in conversation?

A: What do you do at the church (or ministry)?

B: I'm the wealth enjoyment minister.

A: The what!?

B: The wealth enjoyment minister.

A: What's that?

B: I help people enjoy their wealth. I show them ways to enjoy it by doing good (making an impact). I build opportunities for them to enjoy it by becoming rich in beautiful good works. I help them to enjoy it by sharing with the fellowship community in ways that fit their

values and life story. I'm also trying to help people avoid a bad result.

A: What's that?

B: Just burying their wealth in the ground and dying with it. Jesus tells us not to do that. This just loses their wealth to death. It often leaves behind broken families – fighting over the money and bingeing on unearned wealth. That's a bad result. There are better options than burying it and dying with it. That's what I share with them.

So, what about you? What's the most personally meaningful impact you could make with wealth? Are there any causes or ministries that have been important in your life?

This not only describes the ministry. It begins carrying it out.

Flip the fundraiser script

Most people react to traditional fundraising with avoidance. They react with resistance. In traditional fundraising, the job is to push through all those rejections to get the money. Get the money. That's literally the job title. Fund = money. Raiser = getter. Get the money. It's unpleasant, but someone has to do it.

For most people, being met with resistance is tough. Having others avoid you is tough. It's tough work. It's difficult emotional labor.

But what if things were different? What if things were the opposite? What if we were handing out amazing blessings? What if we were offering the best deal ever? What if we were offering the most amazing life experience possible? How might

those interactions be different? How might that work be different?

The message of Biblical fundraising is the message of donor benefit. Our passage doesn't just mention enjoyment. It explains the process for achieving that enjoyment. It lists donor benefit after donor benefit after donor benefit. It shows the best way to live life. It is, quite literally, the best deal ever. Nothing can compete. The point of the Biblical fundraising message is positive. It's exciting. It's fun. It's "Enjoy your wealth!"

Paul's own fundraising script

In this passage, Paul tells Timothy how to fundraise. In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul himself is fundraising. Does Paul mention donor benefits? Yes – and in many ways.

Is Paul commanding them to give? No. He makes that clear. He writes,

"I am not saying this as a command ... I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage" (2 Corinthians 8:8a, 10a).

Paul is not commanding a donation. He's giving an opinion [*gnōmēn*].⁸ Other translations explain that he's giving "advice."⁹ He's giving some "counsel."¹⁰

Why is he doing this? He's doing it to help the donor. Various translations read,

"And in this matter I am giving advice because it is profitable for you,"¹¹

"Now I am giving an opinion on this because it is profitable for you"¹²

“I am giving you my opinion on this matter because it will be helpful to you”¹³

Paul is giving counsel that benefits the donor. It is profitable¹⁴ or helpful¹⁵ to them. It is to their advantage. Other translations describe this as

- “good for you”¹⁶
- “benefits you”¹⁷
- “beneficial for you”¹⁸
- “to help you”¹⁹

What advantage or profit does giving provide to these donors? Paul explains point by point. He gives an exhaustive list of benefits:

- It proves the sincerity of their love in response to Jesus’s grace. (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).
- It completes their leadership role as the first who started to support this fundraising project. (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).
- It is not a hardship for them. It is equality in sharing with others in the mutual fellowship community. (2 Corinthians 8:13).
- It is sharing with those who will benefit the donors in the future. (2 Corinthians 8:14).
- It fulfills their leadership role as having already motivated others to give generously. (2 Corinthians 9:2).
- It avoids public embarrassment for the donors. (2 Corinthians 9:3-4).
- It will allow them to “reap generously”. (2 Corinthians 9:6b).

- It responds to God, who “is able to make all grace overflow to you, so that, always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.” (2 Corinthians 9:8b).
- It responds to God, who will “multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.” (2 Corinthians 9:10b).
- Put bluntly, “you will be enriched in everything for all liberality.” (2 Corinthians 9:11a).
- It will produce in others “many thanksgivings to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:12b).
- It will cause others to “glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the Gospel of Christ” (2 Corinthians 9:13b).
- It will cause others to “glorify God ... for the liberality of your contribution” (2 Corinthians 9:13b, d).
- It will cause others to pray on the donors’ behalf. (2 Corinthians 9:14).
- It will cause others to “yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God to you.” (2 Corinthians 9:14b).
- It responds to God “for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15b).

That’s a long list! What use of wealth could ever compare with that set of benefits? What is a better way to enjoy wealth than this?

Paul’s fundraising instructions to Timothy are all about donor benefits. Paul’s own fundraising letter is all about donor benefits. Both messages are all about helping, profiting, and benefiting the donor.

The “fun” raiser’s new script

Now suppose you were a fundraiser in that crazy fundraising department. You remember the one. They have the banner on the wall that reads,

“Mission Statement: We help rich people enjoy their wealth!”

Think about it. What would it feel like to do that? What would it feel like to actually help rich people enjoy their wealth? Doesn’t it seem kind of ... fun?

Consider this. Suppose you asked someone the following:

“I have a rich friend. I’m going over this afternoon to help him enjoy his wealth. Do you want to come along and help, too?”

Sounds fun, right? Now, try this instead.

“I have a rich friend. I’m going over this afternoon to ask him for a big donation. Do you want to come along and help, too?”

Does that sound fun? Probably not. What’s the likely response now? Probably a bit less positive. The first description actually matches scriptural fundraising. The second one might not.

The “fun” raiser’s new goal

In scripture, the goal isn’t just to get a big donation. The goal is “party-time” enjoyment. (1 Timothy 6:17). It’s donor happiness.²⁰ God doesn’t want just a donation. He wants a cheerful, glad, joyful, hilarious giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7b explains that God loves a “*hilaron*” giver. Various translations read,

“not of reluctance, or of constraint: for God loves the hilarious giver.”²¹

“not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”²²

“not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly.”²³

“not according to grief or of compulsion, for God loves the joyful giver.”²⁴

Giving is supposed to be fun! It’s supposed to be more blessed or happy than even receiving a gift. As Acts 20:35 explains,

“the Lord Jesus himself said, ‘There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.’” (GNT).²⁵

That fundraising mission statement hanging on the wall might seem crazy. It’s certainly provocative. It might even be offensive. But it’s also scriptural. If the wealthy person is not using their wealth for the purpose of [eis] enjoyment [*apolausin*], they aren’t following the text. If we aren’t helping them to do this, we aren’t following the text.

Do the work!

God wants cheerful givers. So, how can we make that happen? By being passive? By doing nothing? No. We do it by creating an enjoyable donor experience. We create an enjoyable use of wealth. We create a giving experience that matches Paul’s words.

The goal of the ministry of major gift fundraising is to get the rich person to enjoy their wealth. It’s to get them to enjoy their wealth by doing good, being rich in good works, being generous and ready to share. The goal is joyful giving. It’s giving with emotion and heart.

This goal excludes some fundraising approaches. Using guilt, duty, pressure, obligation, or compulsion can work to get

a gift. But they rarely produce joyful giving. They don't match with Biblical fundraising.

Yet, this does not mean we're supposed to be passive. It is not scriptural to say,

“We only want joyful givers, so we don't try to motivate others. That way we know they aren't giving it out of compulsion, pressure, or obligation. We just sit back and wait for them to act.”

That's not Biblical. It's just lazy.

The Biblical role is intensely active. 1 Timothy 6:17 describes constant, ongoing, nonstop instructing, advising, and encouraging [*parangelle*]. This nonstop action motivates good [*kalos*] works [*ergon*]. Hebrews 10:24 also directs doing good [*kalos*] works [*ergon*]. In Hebrews, how do we make that happen? By sitting back and waiting for people to feel moved? No. The verse explains:

- “Consider how we may spur on one another”²⁶
- “Think of ways to motivate one another”²⁷
- “Consider how to stir up one another”²⁸
- “Consider one another to provoke”²⁹
- “Consider how to encourage one another”³⁰

This work is intensely active. It requires instructing, advising, encouraging, provoking, stirring up, and motivating. It is an ongoing, continual, nonstop ministry.

The goal is joyful giving. Some approaches don't work because they produce giving that is not joyful. Other approaches don't work because they don't produce giving of any kind. Avoiding the first approach is not an excuse for embracing the second.

The great inversion

The goal is cheerful giving. In Biblical terms, fundraising that fails to create this is bad fundraising. It's bad fundraising, even if it gets the money. This can sound burdensome. We might think,

“It's hard enough just to get the gift! Now, I'm supposed to make sure it's fun for the donor, too? That's exhausting!”

If it feels burdensome, we're missing the point. A scriptural approach isn't an addition to traditional fundraising. It's an inversion of traditional fundraising.

Traditional fundraising is about getting from the donor. Biblical fundraising is about giving to the donor. It's about blessing the donor. It's about delivering an experience that is worth the gift. It's about helping the donor to enjoy their wealth. It's about delivering a fundraising message “because it will be helpful to you.” (2 Corinthians 8:10a). It's about massive donor benefits. It's about an ongoing ministry to and for the donor.

This great inversion leads to big gifts. It leads to big, joyful gifts. It's not just money-getting. It's a scriptural ministry that leads to joyful donors and joyful fundraisers.

In 1847, Robert Murray M'Cheyne encouraged giving by explaining,

“It is not your money I want, but your happiness.”³¹

What about us? Is our fundraising mission focused on donor enjoyment? Is it focused on donor joy? Is it focused on donor happiness? If not, we might be doing it wrong!

PART II

GOOD STEWARDSHIP IS FUN

(Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!)

Hooray! It's a stewardship sermon!

It has to be done. Everyone knows it. There's no use putting it off any longer. The church member steels himself. "Alright, let's get this over with," he thinks. The preacher feels the same. It has to be done. "Alright, let's get this over with," he thinks too.

Yes, it's time for the stewardship sermon – or series. And, yes, it has to be done. The data shows it. Just ignoring the topic leads to weak giving.³² But why is this so uncomfortable? Does it have to be that way? Actually, no. There is a better way. A positive stewardship message is possible. It's also scriptural.

It's not yours!

The goal is valid. We want people to see themselves as stewards. We want their giving to reflect this. We want to teach stewardship. That's fine. The problem is often how we try to get there.

Suppose you're carrying a purse, bag, or briefcase. Someone points to it and says, "That's not yours!" How would you react? Maybe you'll grab the bag tighter. Maybe you'll try to move away. We often get that same reaction to a traditional stewardship message. It's the same reaction because it's the same message.

That stewardship message starts negative. It begins with an attack. It begins with,

“That stuff you think you own? It’s not yours! It belongs to God.”

Starting with “It’s not yours!” is negative. A negative opening usually triggers a negative reaction. And that’s often how stewardship messages go. But that’s not the only way to approach the topic.

Fun stewardship

Stewardship doesn’t have to start negatively. It doesn’t have to start with,

“It’s not yours!”

Instead, it can be positive. This positive stewardship message is entirely scriptural. But it’s different. It starts positively. It ends positively. It says, “You know, that stuff you own?”

1. It’s part of an ongoing gift intended for enjoyment. So, enjoy it!
2. It’s yours, but it’s disappearing. So, enjoy it!
3. What prevents enjoyment?
 - Bingeing with excess consumption is not an enjoyable life.
 - Burying it and dying with it is not an enjoyable life.
4. What leads to enjoyment?
 - Putting it to work to do lasting good in the world.
 - Putting it to work to bring great beauty into the world.
 - Embracing your identity as a joyful sharer, connecting to the fellowship-community family.

- Making God happy by showing all the good you did with what He gave you.
- That's grabbing hold of real life!

This is a positive message. It's not trying to take away the enjoyment of things. It's doing the opposite. It's increasing the enjoyment of things.

A gift is more fun!

The traditional stewardship message starts negative. The message is this:

“That stuff you think you own? It's not yours! It belongs to God.”

This places God in the role of the taker. Paul's message does the opposite. It places God in the role of the giver. In 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul writes of,

“God who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.”

God's not reaching into your wallet to take your stuff. He's reaching in to put it there in the first place. And this isn't just about money. It's about all things. It's all a gift.

It's a gift made with love. That makes it more enjoyable. It's a gift made with a purpose. That purpose is enjoyment. Enjoying it is fulfilling the desires of the one who gave it. That makes it easier to enjoy.

Consider these stewardship messages from the past. In 1714, Matthew Henry commented,

“To be religious, is to enjoy God in all our creature-comforts; and is not that pleasant? It is to take the common supports and conveniences of life ... as the products of his providential care concerning us, ... The

sweetness of these is more than doubled, it is highly raised, when by our religion we are taught and enabled to see them all coming to us from the goodness of God, as our great benefactor, and thus to enjoy them richly, 1 Tim. VI. 17, while those who look no further than the creature, enjoy them very poorly, and but as the inferior creatures do.”³³

Recognizing God as the source can be a reason for enjoyment. Stewardship doesn't have to be a message of burden and obligation. It doesn't have to be part of a guilt trip. In 1832, Charles Simeon wrote,

“There is then ... no disappointment in the use; no grief in the loss; no dread of the responsibility attached to it. On the contrary, ‘God has given to his people all things richly to enjoy:’ and they have a rich enjoyment of every thing, because they enjoy God in it. They receive it all as his gift: they taste his love in it.”³⁴

Professor Gordon Fee explains,

“The reason everything may be enjoyed lies in the recognition that everything, including one's wealth, is a gift, the expression of God's gracious generosity.”³⁵

Tilly Dillehay explains 1 Timothy 6:17 this way,

“Their enjoyment is not the clutching enjoyment of the glutton or a miser; it's the enjoyment of a child sitting in front of something his father made for him especially. It's freely felt, free in the knowledge that because of the Father we have, there's more where this came from.”³⁶

It's a gift. We're supposed to enjoy it. This is not a new idea. Deuteronomy 26:11 gives a “thou shalt” in the King James Version. In modern language, this reads,

“you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your

God has given to you and your household.”

Enjoyment is mandatory. It’s commanded.

God provides all things. He gives wealth. He gives the ability to produce wealth.³⁷ What’s the origin story of our wealth? It’s God’s gift. And how should that make us feel? It should make us rejoice. As Deuteronomy 12:7 commands,

“There you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.”

A gift is more fun to share!

God richly supplies us with all things. Recognizing that it’s a gift changes the experience. This makes things more enjoyable to share. We can say,

- It was a gift to me, so I’m happy to share it with you.
- It was a gift to me, and I’ll be getting much more where that came from, so I’m happy to share it with you.
- It was a gift to me, and this will make the one who gave it to me happy, so I’m happy to share it with you.

Each of these makes sharing more enjoyable.

Paul is not giving a message of asceticism. It’s not a message of painful giving. It’s the opposite. It’s a message of enjoyment.

Use it or lose it!

Paul’s message doesn’t start with

“You’re not the owner!”

Instead, it starts with

“Your ownership is going to disappear.”

This might seem negative. It’s not. It’s just simple reality. In 1 Timothy 6:7, Paul writes,

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.”

He’s making an obvious statement. It’s not even particularly Christian. His pagan contemporaries said the same things.³⁸

A person might be an atheist, a Buddhist, or a humanist. It doesn’t matter. Paul’s statement is undeniably true. This is not a matter of faith. It’s not a matter of argument or persuasion. It’s an obvious truth.

We know we’re going to die. We know we can’t keep our stuff. We also know we might lose it even before we die. Either way, our ownership is going to disappear.

Starting with, “It’s not yours!” is a tough sell. It can trigger resistance and even tighter grasping of one’s things. Saying, “It’s not yours to keep” is obvious. It’s impossible to deny.

But facing that reality changes our role. It means we are only temporary managers. We’re stewards. That’s not a matter of choice. It’s not a matter of religion. It’s a necessary consequence of our temporary lives.

Recognizing that we’re only temporary managers makes it easier to share things. It removes the pain and loss from giving. We don’t get to keep it anyway. We might as well use it because we’re going to lose it. Whether it’s our money, our stuff, our time, our health, or our earthly lives, the same reality applies.³⁹ It’s ours, but it’s not ours to keep.

We are temporary managers of our stuff. This is an observable reality. But what if our stuff is also a gift from God? What if He gave it to us for a purpose? That changes everything. That leads to the principles of Biblical stewardship. It separates good stewardship from bad stewardship.

What is bad stewardship?

The question is not, “Are we temporary managers?” (That fact is biologically inescapable.) The question is, “What kind of temporary managers are we going to be?” Are we going to be foolish or shrewd? Are we going to be good stewards or bad stewards?

So, what is bad stewardship? There are two ways to be a bad steward: bingeing and burying. Jesus gives examples of bingeing bad stewards. He gives even more examples of burying bad stewards. Both stewards are bad. They’re both bad for the same reason. They never use the money for its intended purpose.

Focusing on a message of “It’s not yours!” is not just a tough sell. It also doesn’t work. It doesn’t actually lead to good stewardship.

Consider the bad stewards. In Matthew 25, he took what the master gave and buried it in the ground. In Luke 19, he hid it away in a napkin.

Did these bad stewards know that it wasn’t their money? Yes. They knew that it belonged to the one who gave it to them. They knew they were only temporary managers. Did they know they would have to account back to the owner at the end? Yes. In fact, they carefully planned their report back to the owner.

They deeply embraced these modern stewardship

messages. And yet, they were bad stewards. They took what they were given, and they hid it. They buried it. Why were they bad managers? Because they never used the money for its intended purpose.

What about us? We can make this same mistake. We can believe,

“It doesn’t belong to us.”

We can believe,

“It all belongs to God.”

But we can still be bad stewards. The temptation to bury it in the ground remains. We might reason,

“I’m managing this for God. But even so, I should probably just hold on to it – for now. I would feel more anxious and stressed without it. If something happened, I’m afraid I would regret not keeping it.”

This same reasoning motivated the bad stewards. Why did they bury it in the ground?

“and I was afraid” (Matthew 25:25).

“for I was afraid” (Luke 19:21).

We might reason,

“Either way, it’s all His anyway. He’ll control it all after I’m gone. I’ll be sure to keep it protected in the meantime. Good stewards protect things, right?”

What report did the bad stewards give? They protected it.

“See, you still have what is yours.” (Matthew 25:25).

“here is your mina” (Luke 19:19).

The bad stewards protected what they had been given. They didn’t want to lose it. They were cautious. In fact, they

were afraid. Their goal was to keep it protected and then give it back, intact, to the real owner.

That all sounds good. It sounds reasonable. But they were bad stewards. Why? Because they never used the money for its intended purpose. They never used it for any purpose.

Jesus tells the Parable of the Rich Fool. He was blessed with enormous wealth. And he just stacked it up in a barn. Luke 12:20 gives God's reaction:

“But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is demanded of you; and as for all that you have prepared, who will own it now?’”

The man was a fool. He never used the wealth for its intended purpose. He never used it for any purpose.

A bad steward never uses the wealth for its intended purpose. We can do this by not using it for any purpose. We can also do this by using it for the opposite purpose. We can take something intended for enjoyment and instead use it for self-destruction. We can use it to fuel a life of abuse on a path of ruin. This is the bingeing bad steward in Matthew 24:48-50.⁴⁰ He, too, is a bad steward. He, too, never uses the money for its intended purpose.

What is good stewardship?

A good steward uses the money or property for its intended purpose. He pursues the goals of the one who appointed him. God gives us all things as a gift. It's a gift with a purpose. That purpose is “for enjoyment.” That's why he gave it.

We can't accomplish that purpose by burying the gift. That leads to anxious hoarding and inevitable loss. We can't

accomplish that purpose by bingeing with it. That leads to addiction or depression.

We accomplish that purpose by putting it to work. We use it to do some lasting good before it disappears. We enjoy it. The next words of scripture tell us how. We enjoy it by using it

- To do intrinsically good works
- To become rich in beautifully good works
- To become a good, joyful, abundance sharer
- To become a connected fellowship-community sharer

That's not just effective stewardship. That's enjoyable stewardship. That's grabbing hold of the life that is really life.

Must we do this perfectly? No. In Jesus's Parable of the Minas, one steward earned twice as much as the other.⁴¹ Both were rewarded enormously. We don't have to stress too much about perfect stewardship. Either way, the rewards are fantastic.

Good stewardship doesn't have to be stressful. It's not supposed to be. We don't need to stress because there's plenty more where that came from. We don't need to stress because the whole purpose of the gift is for enjoyment. Good stewardship is fun. It's the most fun we can have with what we've been given. Good stewardship is joyful stewardship!

Good stewardship increases ownership

God had richly blessed us. It's a gift. It's given for the purpose of enjoyment. The proper response is not to bury the gift. That leads to a life of stressful protection and inevitable loss. That's not enjoying it.

The proper response is also not to reject the gift. Paul fought against this. He fought against self-righteous asceticism. That's not enjoying it either.

The goal is not to bury or to reject. Instead, it's to enjoy. This means holding it open-handedly. It's holding it lightly.⁴² Why can we hold it lightly? Because we know it's all disappearing anyway. Why can we hold it lightly? Because we know it's a gift, and there's plenty more where that came from.

The traditional stewardship message often starts with, "It's not yours!" It's about giving up ownership. Paul's stewardship message is the opposite. It increases ownership. It increases ownership by creating abundance.

In 387 A.D., John Chrysostom explained this. He wrote of 1 Timothy 6:17,

"The hoarder is a keeper, not a master, of wealth; a slave, not a Lord. For he would sooner give anyone part of his own flesh, than his buried gold. It's as though he were ordered and compelled of someone to touch nothing of these hidden treasures. So with all earnestness he watches and keeps them, abstaining from them, as if it were another's. And certainly, they are not his own. For what he can neither decide to share with others, nor distribute to the needy, even on pain of infinite punishments, how can he possibly account his own? How can he be a real owner of those things, of which he has neither free use, nor enjoyment?"⁴³

A hoarder is not truly an owner. It's not his to use. It's not his to give. It's not his to enjoy. Again, John Chrysostom explains,

"A greedy man is one thing, and a rich man is another thing. The greedy man is not rich; he is in want of many

things, and while he needs many things, he can never be rich.”⁴⁴

The greedy, the miser, the hoarder – they never live in abundance. They never have “extra.” They never have wealth that they can hold open-handedly. They never have wealth that they can use freely.

That wealth is not really theirs. They’re not free to use it as they want. They’re not free to enjoy it. They can only anxiously protect it. They bury it just to die with it.⁴⁵

That’s foolish. And it’s not fun. The only two outcomes are loss during life or loss at death. The goal is not living rich; it’s dying rich. Except this goal is foolish. It’s logically impossible. No one dies rich. Everyone dies with nothing. People may ask,

“How much did he leave?”

The answer is always the same.

“All of it.”

As Paul reminds us, we can’t take it with us.

Good stewardship is great gain

Holding open-handedly doesn’t decrease ownership; it increases ownership. We have real ownership only over those things that are “extra.” If it’s a necessity, then we can’t use it for whatever we want. We have to hold it tightly. We can’t enjoy it. We can’t share it with others.

Biblical stewardship increases abundance. It increases what is “extra.” We don’t have to hoard up for every possible danger. Why not? Because we’ve set our hope

“on God, who richly supplies us with all things” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

We respond to God's ongoing rich supply. We respond with trust in God as the ongoing provider. We're in an up-close and personal relationship with God. He's in the ongoing process of richly providing us with all things. We already have the ultimate security blanket for our future.

If our only hope is in wealth, then we'll never have extra. There is no limit to possible future catastrophes. Theft. Taxes. Ransom demands. Communist revolution. Confiscation. Uncovered health expenses. Dementia. Market crash. War. Hyperinflation. Divorce. Lawsuits. It never ends. We can never use our wealth because we might need it someday.

Only by placing our trust in a richly providing God can we have extra. If God is providing for our tomorrow, we become free to enjoy more of what we have today. This is a great gain.

Paul opens his discussion of wealth with this great gain. He explains,

“But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

When our future is fully and richly provided for, we don't need that much to be content right now. We don't need to hoard up for every possible future event. This converts so much of what we have into “extra.” It becomes an abundance. It becomes a gain. This gives us freedom to use it. We don't get less ownership of our stuff. We get more!

We're temporary managers. That's not theological. It's biological. We're stewards because our ownership is

temporary. The hoarder is a steward for death. He can't use or enjoy his wealth. He's saving and protecting it to give to death.

The binger is a steward for his addictions. He's not free to enjoy his wealth either. He must give it all to the destructive passions that are his master. Neither the miser nor the addict experience abundance. Neither experience real ownership.

Biblical stewardship is different. Holding open-handedly increases ownership. It allows the owner to take control of what he has. It allows him to enjoy it. Holding open-handedly increases abundance. It's not saving it up for death. It's increasing abundance for life.

Party-time stewardship!

A Biblical stewardship message doesn't have to be negative. It doesn't have to start with, "It's not yours!"⁴⁶ It doesn't have to be about losing what's ours.

Biblical stewardship can be a positive message. It can be a message about God's ongoing, loving provision. It can be a message about how best to enjoy God's rich provision. It can be a message about living the best life ever.

This approach is not just more effective. It's essential. It's essential because giving is not the goal. Yes, that's right. The goal of teaching stewardship is not giving.

God doesn't want giving. Nope. God wants only a specific kind of giving. He wants giving only with the right emotion. He wants a cheerful, "hilariously" joyful [*hilaron*] giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7). He wants giving that is even happier [*makarion*] than receiving a gift. (Acts 20:35). He wants giving that overflows from abundant joy. (2 Corinthians 8:2).

He wants giving that is “party-time” enjoyable [*apolausin*]. (1 Timothy 6:17).

If the gift doesn’t have positive emotion, He doesn’t want it. If it’s not accompanied by joy, happiness, and love, He doesn’t want it. It doesn’t matter how much it is. Without that positive emotion, it’s all pointless. (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Stewardship teaching can create a sense of obligation or even guilt. And yes, that can lead to giving. But it leads to giving that God doesn’t want. It leads to giving that God won’t bless. (Deuteronomy 15:10). If our teaching results in painful giving, it’s a failure. Good stewardship is supposed to be fun.

Understanding this goal changes the stewardship message. A positive stewardship message isn’t just more effective. It’s mandatory. A positive giving experience isn’t just nice to have. It’s required.

These are essential because giving isn’t the goal. Giving with positive emotion is the goal. Enjoyment is the goal. That’s why God richly provides us with all these things in the first place.

If we don’t pursue His goal, we’re being bad stewards. If we don’t use the money for its intended purpose, we’re being bad stewards. If we don’t use it “for enjoyment,” we’re being bad stewards. Good stewardship isn’t just impactful. Good stewardship must be enjoyable. Good stewardship must be fun.

PART III

DONOR JOY IN PRACTICE AND SCIENCE

(Message 5: Use your wealth to take a joy ride!)

Donor joy in fundraising

Paul describes giving as a means of enjoying wealth. This is not just a matter of ancient Greek semantics. It's how effective fundraising actually works. It's how the best major gift fundraisers do their jobs.

A sample of books and articles from top fundraisers makes this clear. (My emphasis in bold throughout.) Richard Perry and Jeff Schreifels explain,

“This whole major gifts thing is not about the money. It is about **bringing joy and fulfillment to donors.**”⁴⁷

Hank Rosso was the founder of the School of Philanthropy at Indiana University. He defined fundraising this way:

“Fundraising is the gentle art of **teaching the joy of giving!**”⁴⁸

One book on fundraising explains,

“They have the opportunity to learn to give through you ... You are helping them **experience the joys of giving.**”⁴⁹

Another explains,

“Motivating donors comes through understanding that **philanthropy brings joy to the donor.**”⁵⁰

Yet another explains,

“Motivating donors does not mean persuading donors to do something that they don’t want to do or that is not in their best interest. Motivating donors comes through understanding that **philanthropy brings joy to the donor** and that if the donor really believes in the mission, motivation is simply a tool to **bring about the donor’s wishes.**”⁵¹

A book on “*Fired-Up Fundraising*” puts it this way,

“Donors **experience joy** when they see **the results of their gifts.**”⁵²

The book “*10 Simple Fundraising Lessons*” shares this guidance,

“When you’ve been in this field long enough, you recognize and experience the **exhilaration felt by donors** of time and money. It’s a genuine treat to witness **the joy they derive from doing good works.** It’s evidenced by **their smiles** and their eagerness to hear about **the impact of their gifts.**”⁵³

The wisdom of real-world experience is consistent. Effective fundraising is about donor joy. It’s about delivering donor enjoyment. Donors experience joy by using their wealth to do good. They experience joy by using it to become rich in good works.

Donor joy at each fundraising step

Effective fundraising is about delivering donor joy. This is true for the overall fundraising process. It’s also true for each step within that process.

How might we open a conversation about giving? We open it by learning what kind of giving experience brings this

person the most joy. Different fundraising experts suggest openings such as

“What gift did you make that has brought **you the most joy**? Why?”⁵⁴

“What philanthropic gift has given **you the greatest joy**? How?”⁵⁵

“What part of philanthropy gives **you the most joy**?”⁵⁶

Why do we ask such questions? Expert fundraisers explain,

“By engaging donors in exploring their philanthropic goals and charitable interests, planned giving staff can effectively help donors along their philanthropic journey and work to secure major and planned gifts. This journey **enables a donor to give joyfully**—meaning that the donor is able to visualize the result of his or her philanthropy, while still being able to feel financially secure.”⁵⁷

In technical fundraising language, this part of the donor journey is called “cultivation.” There’s an even better name for it. We can

“redefine the fundraising cycle with cultivation as ‘creating **the joyful** giver,’”⁵⁸

We’re getting the donor ready. We’re getting them ready for joyful giving.

The next step in the donor journey is the call to adventure. It’s the “solicitation.” It’s the ask. And how do we do that? One book about the ask explains,

“Best of all, the Ask can and should be **fun**. If it is fun for the asker, it will be a **fun** and positive time for the person being asked. People should **see and**

experience the joy their prospective gifts will bring to the group's beneficiaries."⁵⁹

Another book explains how to prepare for the ask. It suggests,

“In your mind's eye, sit with the donor and propose what you've come up with as a place he can help. Is he thrilled? Has he found **fulfillment and joy**? If not, start over.”⁶⁰

And what about after the ask? We'll want to send a thank you note. One book lists “The ten essentials of a perfect thank-you letter.” Rule number one is this:

“1. Joy.

You want, first and foremost, to make the reader—the donor, your friend, your supporter—**experience a genuine sense of joy** when they open your letter ... Suddenly, your **donor is a hero.**”⁶¹

After the thank you note, we still want to maintain the donor relationship. In technical fundraising language, this next step is called “stewardship.” One book describes its best “stewardship technique” as

“Bring the person to the organization ... **let them 'experience' the joys and benefits of their gift** or investment.”⁶²

What about writing a newsletter? What's the best way to do that? Another book explains,

“A properly prepared donor newsletter will add heaps to your bottom line, **bring a tsunami of joy to your donors**, and boost the lifetime value and retention rates of your organization's donors to new heights.”⁶³

There are multiple steps in the fundraising process. They have different technical names, but each has the same goal. Each is about delivering donor joy.

Donor joy in managing boards and volunteers

Often, fundraisers need to work with their boards. And what if those board members don't like fundraising? What can we do? How do we, in Gail Perry's words,

“transform a board member's negative perspective on fundraising?”

She suggests teaching them that

“Giving Is a **Joyous** Experience.

We will introduce them to the **joy** and **pleasure** donors feel when they make a gift that can **create a change** for the better. How did the board members themselves feel the last time they made a contribution to a nonprofit organization? Was it **pleasurable**? Was it powerful or **joyful**?”⁶⁴

Ultimately, we may want board members to encourage others to donate. How can we do that? Again, Perry explains,

“Board members begin to see that if they can get over their feelings of distaste and fear, then they can bring important and **positive experiences** to their friends and associates.”⁶⁵

Others report this same transformation. Volunteers initially fear fundraising. Later, they find that they've enjoyed the experience. Why? Dr. Stuart Grover explains,

“They discovered that they were giving others **the chance for joy.**”⁶⁶

In other words,

“Your request for your friend to join you simply gives him or her **the chance to feel joy** through supporting a good cause.”⁶⁷

In our fundraising efforts, we might work with board members. We might work with volunteers. In either case, the goal is the same. It’s to transform their understanding of fundraising. Effective fundraising is all about delivering donor joy.

Donor joy in different gift types

These same ideas apply to all kinds of gifts. What about raising money through gifts in wills? How does that work? The book “*Legacy and In-Memory Fundraising*” explains,

“A legacy gift **offers people real joy**; nobody would leave a legacy if it did not.”⁶⁸

Others describe the motivation for legacy societies this way:

“A bequest to a non-profit is often a donor’s single largest, most thoughtful charitable gift in their lifetime, and **it should be joyous**.”⁶⁹

What about more complex planned gifts?⁷⁰ A guide on charitable gift annuities explains,

“Professionals who market and discuss these giving arrangements should make a point of linking the gift annuity with **the joys of** and motivations for **giving**.”⁷¹

And what about giant gifts? Suppose we want a million or multi-million-dollar gift. What do those look like? The book “*Million-Dollar Moments*” explains,

“In all cases of which I am familiar, million-dollar gifts were the result of a deep belief in the cause, long

involvement of the donor with the organization, and **a feeling of satisfaction and joy on the part of the donor.**"⁷²

Jerold Panas conducted in-depth interviews with more than 50 "mega" donors. Each had made gifts in the millions of dollars. He writes,

"it was a persistent theme dominating nearly every interview. It was true with every single donor. It dealt with the **joy of giving**, the sheer **ecstasy**... A recurring pattern was the towering **gratification** they received from making the gift."⁷³

We can also learn about giant gifts from others. Financial advisors are often part of the process. One advisor to ultra-high net worth families explains of these donors,

"It is the experience of **joy** and **meaningful accomplishment** that comes from fulfilling their passions that inspires them to commit more of their time and money to organizations that allow them to fulfill their passions."⁷⁴

And suppose we want these major donors to then refer us to other major donors. How do we do that? One book offers this example dialogue,

"You just made a generous commitment to _____ ... How do you feel about your decision?' followed by asking, 'Who do you know that might **enjoy the same sense of fulfillment** you are experiencing right now?'"⁷⁵

Joy works. Joy sells – and it refers!

Donor joy and fundraising failure

Delivering donor joy leads to success in major gift fundraising. What leads to failure? One book asks, “Why do Major Gift Officers fail?” The first listed reason is:

“Failure to understand **the joy of giving.**”⁷⁶

The authors explain,

“It bears repeating that if you think fundraising is ultimately only about the money, you will fail.”

Another reason for failure is “Failure to ask.” They explain,

“Even many bold and assertive MGOs will sometimes back away from making the actual request for funding, **forgetting that the act of giving is a real joy for donors.**”

Sometimes, the problem is not failing to ask for a gift. Sometimes it’s failing to respond to a gift. One book on fundraising explains,

“The donor who is excited because he is giving more will be waiting for your response of gratitude. If the fundraiser fails to acknowledge that increase, he takes away **the joy the donor has** in giving more.”⁷⁷

In examining both failed and successful capital campaigns, Dr. Stuart Grover asked,

“What are the attitudes that ensure success?”

His number one answer was

“Key attitude #1: Giving is **joyful**”⁷⁸

He explains,

“People give because it expresses their deepest values and desires. The result of a gift is **joy** to the person who gives.”

When fundraising is about delivering the experience of donor enjoyment, it succeeds. Otherwise, it fails.

Donor joy and the fundraiser’s career

The focus on donor joy is practical. It works. It works for fundraising. But it also works for the fundraiser. It changes the fundraiser’s experience. It changes the fundraiser’s occupation. Another book on fundraising explains,

“I like raising money. I like everything about it ... Helping a successful executive find new **meaning** and **joy in life** from a charitable gift.”⁷⁹

Yet another book shares this story. A new fundraiser had just closed her first major gift. She called her fundraising mentor, exclaiming,

“‘She said YES! My donor said yes!’ She was practically screaming into the phone.

‘One million dollars, Richard! Can you believe it?’

‘Yes, I can,’ I said.

‘And here’s why I can believe it. You were prepared. You were **focused on your donor and her desires**. You knew exactly where you were going. And what mattered most to you was not the money but **all the joy the donor would experience** by helping in this generous way and all the help people in need would get.’”⁸⁰

How do fundraisers stay motivated in their careers? One expert suggests,

“Take the time to reflect on the gifts you helped close that made you feel good, and **the joy that donors felt** in making those gifts.”⁸¹

Donor joy works in fundraising. It works for donors. It also works for fundraisers.

Donor joy in Christian ministries

Donor joy is essential for success in fundraising. It's even more important for fundraising in Christian ministries. A book on ministry fundraising advises fundraisers to

“exchange the stress and drudgery of fundraising for a **joyful ministry**”.⁸²

Pastor Chip Ingram writes,

“Giving is meant to be **joyful** and fulfilling ... It isn't rooted in guilt, self-righteousness, or a martyr complex. It's rooted in **joy**.”⁸³

This understanding is powerful. It also leads to big giving. Another book on ministry fundraising explains,

“but remember it is the heavy givers who most likely have **discovered the joy of generosity**.”⁸⁴

Delivering donor enjoyment works. It works to produce major gifts. And more importantly, it works to produce the kind of giving that God wants. God doesn't just want giving. God wants only a specific kind of giving. He wants joyful giving.

Other approaches might work to get money. But they don't work to get joyful giving. A book on “*Conversational*

Fundraising” explains,

“It is true that some gift decisions are made out of guilt, obligation, pressure, duty, or fear. Unfortunately, these negative reasons do not produce the kinds of gifts that we are looking for: those that are **heart inspired and joyfully made.**”⁸⁵

Delivering donor enjoyment works. It works to produce big gifts. That’s great. But as a ministry to the donors, something else is even better. It works to produce joyful gifts.

Donor joy in scientific research

What works in fundraising? Books from successful fundraisers make it clear. It’s all about delivering donor enjoyment. It’s about giving as a means of enjoying one’s wealth. That’s not just scripture. That’s real-world fundraising practice.

But what about science? What can we learn from academic research on this topic? We learn the same thing. We get the same answers. Giving is a means of enjoying one’s wealth.

Professor Sara Konrath summarizes a wide range of research findings explaining,

“When fundraisers help givers give, they may not realize that they are bringing these givers more happiness and better health.”⁸⁶

Professor Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson put it this way:

“The association between generous practices and personal well-being is strong and highly consistent across a variety of types of generous practices and

measures of well-being ... generous practices actually create enhanced personal well-being.”⁸⁷

They summarize,

“The more generous Americans are, the more happiness, health, and purpose in life they enjoy.”

Other researchers summarize the scientific findings this way:

“happier people give more and giving makes people happier, such that happiness and giving may operate in a positive feedback loop (with happier people giving more, getting happier, and giving even more).”⁸⁸

Beyond such summaries, we can look at statistical results from individual studies. For example, one study of a capital campaign for a Christian school found

“a significant relationship between charitable giving behavior and self-reported enjoyment during the campaign activity.”⁸⁹

Another study compared church members. It looked at those who gave much (9% or more of income). It compared them with those who gave little (0 to 2%). It measured biological responses to a mentally stressful task. It found,

“the Give Little group had significantly higher anger and hostility measures, lower forgiveness levels, and poorer stress coping strategies than the Give Much group. The Give Much group generally had baseline and stress response indices that were more consistent with good health than the Give Little group.”⁹⁰

Giving builds both health and happiness. It even creates strength. One study found that

“participants who had donated to a charity were able to squeeze a handgrip for more than 20 seconds longer than were control participants. Participants also reported happier moods after donating, but their enhanced strength did not stem from their elevated happiness. Thus, prosocial spending may have independent positive effects on both emotional and physical vitality.”⁹¹

The scientific research may be new. The results are not. In the fourth century, John Chrysostom called charitable giving

“the foundation of health, the abundance of light and the origin of joyfulness.”⁹²

In the first century, Seneca taught that

“The good man therefore finds happiness in the mere act of giving benefits.”⁹³

We see the same answers in practice, science, philosophy, and theology. The point is this. The Bible is true. The offer Paul is telling Timothy to make is scientifically legitimate. This is, indeed, the way to enjoy wealth. It is, indeed, the way to grab hold of a better life experience.

¹ “The construction *eis* plus the noun expresses purpose ... The infinitives thus describe how wealth is to be enjoyed, namely in the ways it is used: first, simply by doing good, ... describing the doing of such works as being rich in them, ... to be generous and sharing” [Malherbe, A. J. (2011). *Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 89.]

² “The second adjunct indicates that the purpose of God’s bringing about these things is ‘for enjoyment’ (*eis apolausin*). The preposition *eis* indicates the intention of the action, which is *apolausin*, with the noun appearing here and in Hebrews 11:24 and denoting enjoyment or pleasure” [Porter, S. E. (2023). *The Pastoral Epistles: A commentary on the Greek text*. Baker Academic. p. 488.]

³ This passage is structured in a poetic form called chiasmus. This is “the use of inverted parallelism of form and/or content which moves toward and away from a strategic central component.” [McCoy, B. (2003). Chiasmus: An important structural device commonly found in Biblical literature. *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal*, 9(2), 17-34.]

The chiastic structure of the passage is:

A-Riches [Death] 6:7,9-10 ...

B-Riches [Now/temporary] 6:17b

C-Riches [Leading to community separation] 6:17c

D-Riches [Tightly grasped as one’s hope] 6:17d

E-Riches [Hidden/disappearing/uncertain] 6:17e

F-Riches [Source/inflow: God’s rich provision to us] 6:17f

G-Riches [Purpose: for enjoyment] 6:17g

F¹-Riches [Use/outflow: Our reciprocal provision to others] 6:18a

E¹-Riches [Visible/beautiful good works] 6:18b

D¹-Riches [Open-handedly shared] 6:18c

C¹-Riches [Leading to community connection] 6:18d

B¹-Riches [Future/permanent] 6:19a

A¹-Riches [Life] 6:19b

⁴ Professor Linda Belleville explains, “*Eis apolausin* does not have to do with spiritual enjoyment but instead with material pleasures.” [Belleville, L. (2017). Investments for abundant life. In J. S. Duvall & V. Verbrugge (Eds.), *Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to Inspire and Instruct*. Zondervan Academic. p. 110.]

⁵ Andreoni, J., Rao, J. M., & Trachtman, H. (2017). Avoiding the ask: A field experiment on altruism, empathy, and charitable giving. *Journal of Political Economy*, 125(3), 625-653.

⁶ DellaVigna, S., List, J. A., & Malmendier, U. (2012). Testing for altruism and social pressure in charitable giving. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 127(1), 1-56.

⁷ “The Pastor believes that the rich enjoying their wealth is a legitimate enterprise, as God has provided it to them for their ‘happiness.’” [Reinhardt, J. (2021). “God, who giveth us richly”: Wealth, authorship, and audience in 1 Timothy 6. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society*, 2(1), 101-114. p. 109.]

⁸ *Gnōmēn*. View, judgment, opinion, counsel. “a personal opinion or judgment formed in (by) an active relationship, the result of direct (‘first-hand’) knowledge.” [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.]

⁹ “Here is my advice:” (New Living Translation); “And herein I give my advice:” (King James Version)

¹⁰ “And I am giving counsel in this matter,” (New American Bible); “But to counsel, I advise you this” (Aramaic Bible in Plain English); “Paul offered an opinion to the church in Corinth rather than a demand or an appeal.... Paul did not order the Corinthian believers by his authority as an apostle but gave counsel.” Pell Jr., B. R. (2023). *Involving high-income believers in church-wide stewardship for missional causes* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 38; *See also*, Thrall, M. E. (2000). *A critical and exegetical commentary on The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Vol. 2). T & T Clark, p. 534.

¹¹ Christian Standard Bible. (Emphasis added.)

¹² Holman Christian Standard Bible. (Emphasis added.)

¹³ International Standard Version. (Emphasis added.); “I’m giving you my opinion because it will be helpful to you.” (GOD’S WORD® Translation).

¹⁴ Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible; Darby Bible Translation; Douay-Rheims Bible; Coverdale Bible of 1535; Anderson New Testament; Worrell New Testament

¹⁵ Berean Standard Bible; Majority Standard Bible; “helpful to you” in International Standard Version; GOD’S WORD® Translation

¹⁶ New Living Translation

¹⁷ English Standard Version

¹⁸ Literal Emphasis Translation

¹⁹ Aramaic Bible in Plain English

²⁰ “He gives us richly all things to make us happy” 1 Timothy 6:17 (Worldwide English New Testament).

²¹ Godbey New Testament

²² New American Standard Bible

²³ Good News Translation

²⁴ Aramaic Bible in Plain English

²⁵ *See also* Acts 20:35b, “it is a greater happiness to give than to receive.” (Mace New Testament); “It is happy to give rather than receive.” (Smith’s Literal Translation); “Giving gifts is more satisfying than receiving them.” (GOD’S WORD® Translation).

²⁶ Hebrews 10:24 (New International Version)

²⁷ Hebrews 10:24 (New Living Translation)

²⁸ Hebrews 10:24 (English Standard Version)

²⁹ Hebrews 10:24 (King James Version; American Standard Version)

³⁰ Hebrews 10:24 (New American Standard Bible)

³¹ M’Cheyne, R. M. (1847). *More blessed to give than to receive*. Border Watch Office. p. 476.

³² Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. [Kindle Edition]. Gospel Light Publications. pp. 92-93, 107.

³³ Henry, M. (1714/1853). The pleasantness of a religious life. In *The complete works of the Rev. Matthew Henry. Volume 1* (pp. 1-39). A. Fullarton and Co. pp. 15-16.

³⁴ Simeon, C. (1832). *Horae Homileticae: Proverbs to Isaiah XXVI (Vol. 7)*. Holdsworth and Ball. p. 103.

³⁵ Fee, G. D. (1988). *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*. Hendrickson. p. 157.

³⁶ Dillehay, T. (2020). *Broken bread: How to stop using food and fear to fill spiritual hunger*. Harvest House Publishers. p. 85.

³⁷ “But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18a New International Version)

³⁸ Seneca (4 B.C. - 65 A.D.) remarked, “Nature strips you as bare at your departure as at your entrance. You may take away no more than you brought in.” [Seneca the Younger. (1971). *Epistles* 102.25. Loeb Classical Library 77, 182-183.] Lucian, born 120 A.D., illustrates a similar point, writing, “Nothing of the pomp of this world will endure; nor can any man take anything hence when he dies. He will go naked out of the world, and his house and his lands and his gold will be another’s, and ever another’s.” [Lucian. (1919). *Contemplantes* 20. Lucian Volume II, Loeb Classical Library 54.]

³⁹ R.C. Sproul is attributed with saying, “The worst sin against stewardship is to waste your life.”

⁴⁰ “But if that evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is not coming for a long time,’ and he begins to beat his fellow slaves, and he eats and drinks with those habitually drunk; then the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect, and at an hour that he does not know,” (Matthew 24:48-50).

⁴¹ Luke 19:11-27

⁴² 1 Corinthians 7:30b-31, “those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.” (New International Version).

⁴³ Chrysostom, J. (1889). Concerning the statutes, Homily 2.14. In P. Schaff (Ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series* (Vol. 9, W. R. W. Stephens, Trans.). Christian Literature Publishing Co. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/190102.htm> [Modified to modernize the language].

⁴⁴ Chrysostom, J. (1889). Concerning the statutes, Homily 2.14. In P. Schaff (Ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series* (Vol. 9, W. R. W. Stephens, Trans.). Christian Literature Publishing Co. <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/190102.htm>

⁴⁵ Jesus summarizes the lesson from the Parable of the Talents, explaining, “For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.” (Matthew 25:29). The good steward aggressively grabbed hold and used the wealth. He immediately treated it with full ownership. The burying bad steward didn’t. He never really “had” the wealth. He didn’t grab hold and take full ownership. He just set it aside. He couldn’t put it at risk like a true owner. He could only anxiously protect it for another. He acted as if it was never really his. He was in the ongoing process (present tense) of “not having” what he had been given. And so, in the Literal Standard Version, “from him who is not having, even that which he has will be taken from him” (Matthew 25:29b). So, too, the hoarder is in the ongoing process of “not having” his wealth. He can’t use it. He can’t share

it. He can't enjoy it. He can't touch it. And, ultimately, he is guaranteed to lose it.

⁴⁶ A traditional stewardship message might begin with the idea of, "It's not yours!" But that's not how Peter described giving to the church. We see that when Peter had a public conversation with a major donor. The donor had made a large gift from a property sale. But he had held some back and lied about it. Peter confronted the donor. But Peter didn't respond by saying,

"You should never have kept back God's money. That money wasn't even yours to start with! It belonged to God. It wasn't yours to do with as you wished!"

Instead, Peter said the opposite. He didn't reject the donor's ownership. He emphasized it. He said,

"While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control?" (Acts 5:4a).

Peter's words were not just different from the message of, "It's not yours!" They were actually the opposite. Peter affirms the donor's personal ownership. It was the donor's property. It was the donor's money. He could do whatever he wanted with it. The donor acted as if he could lie to the church and keep some of the church's money for himself. But it wasn't the church's money. Any giving was purely optional. Thus, lying about his giving was not only offensive, it was also pointless.

⁴⁷ Perry, R. & Schreifels, J. (April 14, 2014). Sheer joy increases giving. [Website] <https://veritusgroup.com/sheer-joy-increases-giving/> ; See also <https://www.nonprofitpro.com/post/sheer-joy-increases-giving/>

⁴⁸ Rosso, H. A. (2016). A philosophy of fundraising. In E. R. Tempel, T. L. Seiler, & D. F. Burlingame (Eds.), *Achieving excellence in fundraising* (4th ed., pp. 6-10). John Wiley. p. 5.

⁴⁹ Morton, S. (2007). *Funding your ministry: An in-depth, Biblical guide for successfully raising personal support*. Navpress. p. 61.

⁵⁰ Bristol, E. & Lysakowski, L. (2013). *The leaky bucket: What's wrong with your fundraising and how you can fix it*. CharityChannel Press. p. 101.

⁵¹ Ciconte, B. L. & Jacob, J. G. (2009). *Fundraising basics: A complete guide*. Jones & Bartlett Learning. p. 28.

⁵² Perry, G. (2007). *Fired-up fundraising: Turning board passion into action*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 70.

⁵³ Eskin, J. (2019). *10 simple fundraising lessons: A common sense guide to overcoming your fear of asking for gifts*. Eskin Fundraising Training, LLC. p. 61.

⁵⁴ Stroman, M. K. (2014). *Asking about asking: Mastering the art of conversational fundraising* (2nd ed.). CharityChannel Press. p. 93.

⁵⁵ Muir, R. (2016, August). *The art of discovery and making the ask*. [Powerpoint slides]. Presented at Fundraising Day Wisconsin.

⁵⁶ Ciconte, B. L. & Jacob, J. G. (2009). *Fundraising basics: A complete guide*. Jones & Bartlett Learning. p. 172.

⁵⁷ Franey, J. W. & Rubin, S. L. (2012, October 3-5). *Is bleak the new black? Motivating donors in the new normal* [Paper presentation]. Partnership for Philanthropic Planning National Conference, New Orleans, LA, p. 12-13.

⁵⁸ Collins, M. E. (2017, Winter). The Ask. *Advancing Philanthropy*, 16-23, p. 20.

(Referencing Marcy Heim and colleague Don Gray).

⁵⁹ Fredricks, L. (2010). *The ask: how to ask for support for your nonprofit cause, creative project, or business venture*. Jossey-Bass. p. 89.

⁶⁰ Perry, R. & Schreifels, J. (2014). *It's not just about the money: How to build authentic major donor relationships*. Veritus group. p. 133

⁶¹ Baker, B., Bullock, K., Gifford, G. L., Grow, P., Jacobwith, L. L., Pitman, M. A., Rees, S. & Truhlar, S. (2014). *The essential fundraising handbook for small nonprofits*. The Nonprofit Academy. pp. 64-65.

⁶² Fredricks, L. (2010). *The ask: how to ask for support for your nonprofit cause, creative project, or business venture*. Jossey-Bass. p. 218. [subsection on "Stewardship Techniques"]

⁶³ Craver, R. M. (2014). *Retention fundraising: The new art and science of keeping your donors for life*. Emerson & Church. p. 160. (Describing the book Ahern, T. (2013). *Making money from donor newsletters: The how-to guide to extraordinary results*. Emerson & Church.)

⁶⁴ Perry, G. (2007). *Fired-up fundraising: Turning board passion into action*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 51.

⁶⁵ Perry, G. (2007). *Fired-up fundraising: Turning board passion into action*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 67.

⁶⁶ Grover, S. R. (2006). *Capital campaigns: A guide for board members and others who aren't professional fundraisers but who will be the heroes who create a better community*. iUniverse. p. 9.

⁶⁷ Grover, S. R. (2006). *Capital campaigns: A guide for board members and others who aren't professional fundraisers but who will be the heroes who create a better community*. iUniverse. p. 8.

⁶⁸ Pidgeon, S. (2018). Using traditional media in legacy asks. In C. Routley & S. Wilberforce (Eds.), *Legacy and in-memory fundraising*, 4th Ed. Directory of Social Change. p. 162.

⁶⁹ O'Carroll, A. & Elward, S. (2012, October 3-5). *Ready, set, go – Reaching new heights with your legacy society* [paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, New Orleans, LA, p. 15.

⁷⁰ A presentation on what major gift and planned gifts fundraisers have in common led with "1. The desire to involve donors in the joy of giving" [Gordy, C. & Holman, M. M. (2011, October). *Job fusion or confusion: The marrying major & planned gifts* [presentation slides]. The Partnership for Philanthropic Planning Conference. p. 37.]

One fundraiser suggests the following approach in describing a charitable remainder trust, "As you can see, you can enjoy the thrill of making a philanthropic gift without sacrificing income or security." [Smith, Jr., W. C. (2005, September 30). *Charitable remainder unitrust and annuity trust: The fundamentals and beyond* [paper presentation]. National Conference on Planned Giving. p. 173.]

⁷¹ Janney, S. (2010). *Options, choices and flexible payments: The gift annuities your donors want*. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, October 13-15, Orlando, FL, p. 1.

⁷² Tempel, G. (2018). *An anniversary gift*. In Y. Kuk (Ed.), *Million-dollar moments: and the amazing professionals who made them possible*. University of Toledo Press. p. 86.

- ⁷³ Panas, J. (2014). *Mega gifts: Who gives them, who gets them*. Emerson & Church. p. 121.
- ⁷⁴ Zeeb, R. C. (2011, October 4-6). *Creating multi-generational, transformational philanthropy (and multi-generational philanthropists and donors)* [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, San Antonio, TX. p. 1.
- ⁷⁵ Stroman, M. K. (2014). *Asking about asking: Mastering the art of conversational fundraising* (2nd ed.). CharityChannel Press. p. 227.
- ⁷⁶ Perry, R. & Schreifels, J. (2014). *It's not just about the money: How to build authentic major donor relationships*. Veritus group. pp. 88-89.
- ⁷⁷ Dillon, W. P. (2012). *People raising: A practical guide to raising funds for individuals and organizations*. Moody Publishers. p. 138.
- ⁷⁸ Grover, S. R. (2006). *Capital campaigns: A guide for board members and others who aren't professional fundraisers but who will be the heroes who create a better community*. iUniverse. p. 6.
- ⁷⁹ Levy, R. (2009). *Yours for the asking: An indispensable guide to fundraising and management*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 2.
- ⁸⁰ Perry, R. & Schreifels, J. (2014). *It's not just about the money: How to build authentic major donor relationships*. Veritus group. p. 147
- ⁸¹ Janney, S. (2013, October 15-17). *The meaning of money* [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, Minneapolis, MN. p. 7.
- ⁸² Williams, K. & Williams, G. R. (2012). *Never do fundraising again: A paradigm shift from donors to lifelong partners*. Relationship Resources, Inc. p. iv.
- ⁸³ Ingram, C. (2011). *The genius of generosity*. GenerousChurch. p. 14.
- ⁸⁴ Morton, S. (2007). *Funding your ministry: An in-depth, Biblical guide for successfully raising personal support*. Navpress. p. 55.
- ⁸⁵ Stroman, M. K. (2014). *Asking about asking: Mastering the art of conversational fundraising* (2nd ed.). CharityChannel Press. p. 158.
- ⁸⁶ Konrath, S. (2022). The joy of giving. In G. Shaker, E. Tempel, S. Nathan & B. Stanczykiewicz (Eds.), *Achieving excellence in fundraising* (5th ed., pp. 45-56). Wiley. p. 46; See also summaries of research findings such as Hui, B. P., Ng, J. C., Berzaghi, E., Cunningham-Amos, L. A., & Kogan, A. (2020). Rewards of kindness? A meta-analysis of the link between prosociality and well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 146(12), 1084-1116; Choi, N. G., & Kim, J. (2011). The effect of time volunteering and charitable donations in later life on psychological wellbeing. *Ageing and Society*, 31, 590-610.
- ⁸⁷ Smith, C. & Davidson, H. (2014). *The paradox of generosity*. Oxford University Press. p. 2.
- ⁸⁸ Anik, L., Aknin, L. B., Norton, M. I., & Dunn, E. W. (2015). Feeling good about giving: The benefits (and costs) of self-interested charitable giving. In D. M. Oppenheimer & C. Y. Olivola (Eds.), *The science of giving: Experimental approaches to the study of charity* (pp. 3-14). Routledge. p. 11.
- ⁸⁹ O'Connor, T. (2019). *Donor motivations for charitable giving: A capital campaign case study* (Doctoral dissertation). Trevecca Nazarene University. p. vi.
- ⁹⁰ Neumann, J. K., & Chi, D. S. (1999). Relationship of church giving to immunological and TxPA stress response. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 27(1), 43-51.

⁹¹ Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2014). Prosocial spending and happiness: Using money to benefit others pays off. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(1), 41-47. p. 45. (Citing Gray, K. (2010). Moral transformation: Good and evil turn the weak into the mighty. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1, 253-258.)

⁹² Chrysostom, J. (1862). Homily 64.5 in Matthew. In Migne, J. P., (Ed.), *Patrologia Graeca*. Volume 58:615. p. 48-49. Translation from Bae, J. (2018). *John Chrysostom: On almsgiving and the therapy of the soul* (Doctoral dissertation). Australian Catholic University. p. 68.

⁹³ Summarizing Seneca's De Beneficiis in Joubert, S. (2000). *Paul as benefactor: Reciprocity, strategy and theological reflection in Paul's collection*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. 42.

Chapter 8

Message 6: Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!

- *Biblical fundraising focuses on the donor's wealth plans.*
- *Ordinary fundraising focuses only on the charity's plans.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are **rich in this present world** not to be high-minded or to set their hope **on the uncertainty of riches**, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

PAUL'S INTERRUPTIVE FUNDRAISING MESSAGE

The practical fundraising story

This passage tells a story. It's a story about the rich Christian. This is a ministry to those with the capacity to make large gifts. In practical fundraising, this works.

It's a story where the fundraiser plays a key role. He is the guiding sage who comes alongside to deliver the call to adventure. In practical fundraising, this works.

It's a story where the rich Christian is the main character. He is the actor. He has agency. He makes the impact. In practical fundraising, this works.

It's a story driven by the rich Christian's backstory. It starts with his personal values and background. It shows how

these compel him to accept the call to adventure. In practical fundraising, this works.

It's a story set in the land of wealth. This is about wealth conversations. It's about wealth sharing. It's about big gifts. In practical fundraising, this works.

These all work. They all help. But one more thing is needed – urgency. The story needs an “inciting incident” to break through the ordinary world. It needs an interruptive challenge.

The interruptive challenge in story

The challenge is to enjoy wealth. It's to enjoy wealth by using it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

In story terms, this is the “call to adventure.”¹ Various story experts call this step by different names. Robert McKee calls it the “inciting incident.”² Others call it the “catalyst.”³

Regardless of the name, the story element is the same. A crisis (threat or opportunity) arises for the main character. He can't just ignore it. It forces him to respond.

But the crisis is not hopeless. It has the promise of a solution. That solution requires accepting a challenge. It requires accepting the call to adventure. This begins the action in the story.

The call to adventure presents

1. A crisis (threat or opportunity) for the main character (i.e., a problem)

2. Promising the hope of a victory (i.e., a solution)
3. That forces a response⁴ (i.e., the action).

This call to adventure follows a negative-positive sequence. It's prompted by a crisis. But it's a crisis that promises the hope of a solution. It's a challenge. But it's a challenge that promises the hope of a victory. Both parts together force the character to respond.⁵

The interruptive challenge in fundraising

Modern fundraising research supports the urgent negative-then-positive interruption. An interruptive fundraising challenge works.⁶ Negative messages grab attention.⁷ But a negative-then-positive challenge works even better.⁸ An urgent challenge works best of all.⁹

We might think that the biggest barrier to successful fundraising is a donor who says "No." It's not. The biggest barrier is the donor who avoids the giving decision altogether. He avoids being asked. If asked, he postpones the decision. He puts it off until later. He avoids making a choice. He forgets to think about it.

Wealthy people often accumulate out of habit. Many didn't start out wealthy. But they had habits of frugality. They saved. They invested in assets that went up in value. They often worked hard to make sure those assets went up in value. They grew a business. They improved real estate. They bought low and sold never.

Through these habits and good fortune, their wealth accumulated. But wealth accumulation has no natural stopping point. There is no ending goal. There is no magic amount. There is no finish line. Instead, the lifetime habits just continue.

This perpetual accumulation never stops. It never stops unless it's interrupted. In story terms, this interruption is called the inciting incident. Something disrupts the main character's ordinary world. It forces a decision. It adds urgency to the story.

The interruptive challenge in scripture

In the Biblical fundraising story, we play the role of the guiding sage. We come alongside [*para-*] with an authorized message [*angelle*]. We interrupt the rich Christian's ordinary world of habitual accumulation. We break through the complacency. We force a decision. We deliver an interruptive message.

In 1 Timothy 6:7, this message begins with a death reminder. The message is

“You're going to die. You can't take it with you. Your wealth ownership will soon end.”

This is also a reminder that our needs are limited. We don't need stuff after we're dead. Recognizing our limited needs can create abundance. If we're likely to leave it at our death, it's extra. Sharing from an abundance is more enjoyable.

1 Timothy 6:17 reminds the donor that he has not placed his hope in uncertain/disappearing [*adēlotēti*] wealth. This word also has another meaning. It also reminds him that he has not placed his hope in hidden/buried [*adēlotēti*] wealth. The message is:

“Your wealth ownership is disappearing. Don't just bury it and die with it. Don't place your hope in buried wealth.”

This ministry is, “to those who are rich in this present

world” or “in this present age.” Literally, this phrase means “in the now time [*en to nyn aiōni*]”. This emphasizes urgency. Wealth holding is temporary. It’s only right now.

However, in the earliest text, the phrase is slightly different. It reads, “To the rich at this opportune moment [*en to nyn kairō*]”. Paul also references the donors’ wealth using “*en to nyn kairō*” in 2 Corinthians 8:14. *Kairō* references “time as opportunity.” It’s used in the sense of

- The suitable time
- The right moment
- A favorable moment

1 Timothy 6:7 interrupts with a harsh negative reality. It highlights the coming crisis – death and the loss of all wealth. Verses 9-10 continue this negative message. They show the disastrous and deadly results of unchecked hoarding.

But then the message turns positive. It’s about God’s ongoing rich provision. It’s about enjoying wealth. It’s about accomplishing real good. It’s about becoming rich in beautiful good works. It’s about storing up treasure. It’s about living the life of a deeply connected, generous sharer in a reciprocal fellowship community. The crisis becomes an opportune moment. It promises the hope of victory.

The interruptive challenge in writing

Effective storytelling uses the urgent negative-then-positive interruption. The “inciting incident” must start with a disruption. Researchers explain,

“But then an event – screenwriters call this event the ‘inciting incident’ – throws life out of balance in the shape of a new opportunity or threat.”¹⁰

Another researcher likens this to an alarm clock. He explains,

“the Inciting Incident is a jolt to the system.”¹¹

Another says it “disrupts the homeostasis.” Another calls it simply “trouble.”¹² Robert McKee explains,

“the inciting incident is the first major event of the telling of the story that radically upsets the balance of forces in the protagonist’s life.”¹³

This crisis must be urgent and compelling. It can’t be vague or trivial. Otherwise, it won’t force a response. McKee illustrates this point. He writes,

“When an Inciting Incident occurs, it must be a dynamic, fully developed event, not something static or vague. This, for example, is not an Inciting Incident: A college dropout ... wakes one morning and says: ‘I’m bored with my life. I think I’ll move to Los Angeles.’ She packs her VW and motors west, but her change of address changes nothing of value in her life ... If, on the other hand, we notice that she’s created an ingenious kitchen wallpaper from hundreds of parking tickets, then a sudden POUNDING on the door brings the police, brandishing a felony warrant for ten thousand dollars in unpaid citations, and she flees down the fire escape, heading West – this could be an Inciting Incident.”¹⁴

To motivate dramatic action, the problem must be disruptive. Without a sufficiently disruptive problem, there’s no reason to act.

The interruptive challenge in ministry

Paul’s words, sounds, and language are all designed to interrupt. They are a “jolt.” They “disrupt.” As we’ll see in the next section, they even create a “POUNDING” effect.

The wealthy donor has a serious problem. His wealth holding is coming to an end. It's disappearing. That's not opinion. It's observable reality.

Paul's message is disruptive. It's a "jolt to the system." It's trying to "throw life out of balance." It's trying to "radically upset" the wealth holder's life. It's a powerful "inciting incident" in the donor's life story.

This is not just a first century issue. It's also a modern one. People accumulate wealth. They often do so beyond the point of their personal need. But many don't stop to realize just how much extra they actually have. And they never stop to decide what to do with this extra. They just keep doing what they've always done. They just keep accumulating. Their wealth management results from inertia rather than intentional choice.

This ministry intentionally interrupts them. It interrupts their unexamined accumulation. It then asks:

"What are you going to do with your disappearing wealth?"

Fundraisers often fear this question. Paul didn't. Fundraisers often don't want to get so personal. Paul was intent on doing so. He viewed the relationship with the rich donor as a ministry relationship. A ministry is supposed to get personal.

These wealth conversations are different from normal fundraising. They have different goals. These are personal, spiritual goals for the rich Christian. These are ministry goals. We don't want their ending to be like the burying bad stewards.

And because of that concern, we interrupt them. We grab attention. We break through. This is what works in story.

It's what works in ministry. It's what works in fundraising. It's what worked 2,000 years ago. It's what still works today.

PART II

PAUL'S INTERRUPTIVE FUNDRAISING SOUNDS

(Message 6: Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!)

Paul's interruptive sounds

For Paul's audience, the musical sound of words was part of their meaning.¹⁵ His letters were intended to be read aloud.¹⁶ They were public performance pieces. In Greek, his fundraising messages made a specific sound. They came with a soundtrack. Just as in the movies, the soundtrack reveals the mood of a scene.

In verse 7, Paul starts the wealth discussion with death. But it's not harsh. Instead, he uses a quotable catchline.¹⁷ It has pleasant, lyrical phrasing.¹⁸ It's a light and breezy reference to the obvious. Verse 8 references contentment and gain.

Verses 9-10 then turn negative and noisy. They use eight death-related Greek words.¹⁹ In English these are,

“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

Paul delivers a steady drumbeat of harsh, death-related words. This “drumbeat” is literal. The sound is a growing crescendo of offensive, noisy interruptions.

Paul uses repeated “p” words – like a beatboxing performance. This is called plosive alliteration. Before, during, and after Paul’s time, this is taken as a negative, abrupt, interruptive sound. In Homer, it’s the sound of “smashing.”²⁰ This sound effect has been described as

- “Harsh”²¹
- A “hammer”²²
- “Cacophony”²³
- A “battering ram”²⁴
- A “burst of energy”²⁵
- “Aggression”²⁶

In verses 9-10, 30% of all words begin with these “p” plosives. In verse 10, the sounds become more intense than in verse 9. The words shorten. Median character length drops from 7 to 5. The soft, lyrical beginning has transformed. The soundtrack grows to a crescendo. The listener is repeatedly struck with harsh plosive sounds. And then it stops. For six verses, Paul changes the topic.

After a break, verse 17 returns to the negative and noisy message.²⁷ It returns to the hammering aggression of the p-plosive interruptive sound. In an English interlinear translation, the word sequence begins: To-the

1. **rich** in the now time,
 - instruct-them not to-be-high-minded nor to-have-hoped in
2. **riches** uncertainty/hiddenness, but on God the-one
 - providing us
 - all things
3. **richly** for enjoyment to-do-good

4. **to-be-rich** in works good, generous-in-distributing to-be ready-to-share
5. **treasuring-up** for-themselves a foundation good for the future so-that
6. **they-may-take-hold** of that-which-is-indeed life

These are six phrases starting with six wealth holding words. We can see the structure. What we miss is the sound. We miss how the words themselves act as instruments.

This sentence begins: *Tois*

1. ***plousiois*** *en tō nyn aiōni*
 - ***parangelle*** *mē hypsēlophronein, mēde ēlpikenai epi*
2. ***ploutou*** *adēlotēti, all' epi Theō tō*
 - ***parechonti*** *hēmin*
 - ***panta***
3. ***plousiōs*** *eis apolausin agathoergein*
4. ***ploutein*** *en ...*

But Paul's message is not just negative. The negative message connects to a positive opportunity. The final sections reference wonderful personal benefits for the donors. The sound track matches this, too. It continues with the rhyming,

... *ergois kalois, eumetadotous einai koinōnikous,*

The harsh, repeated plosive soundtrack softens. The plosive “p” sounds are softened by leading vowels. The other sounds become pleasant, euphonious, and even lyrical.²⁸

5. ***apothēsaurizontas*** *heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon hina*
6. ***epilabōntai*** *tēs ontōs zōēs*

The sounds become pleasant and positive. So does the message itself.²⁹ It's all about enjoyment, beauty, abundance, and lasting treasure.

Paul's plosive poetry in practice

In our passage, Paul tells Timothy, "Here's what you say."³⁰ It matches what Paul himself has said in his fundraising. This is not just true of the words. It's also true of the sounds.

In 1 Timothy 6:17, he tells Timothy to deliver this fundraising message centered on "enjoyment." In 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul himself delivers a similar fundraising message. He writes,

"And God is able to bestow every blessing on you in abundance, so that richly enjoying all sufficiency at all times, you may have ample means for all good works."³¹

The sequence and content parallel each other. 1 Timothy 6:17 / 2 Corinthians 9:8 explain,

1. God richly supplies / God blesses with abundance
2. For the purpose of [*eis*] / for the purpose of [*hina*]
3. Enjoyment / extreme contentment-sufficiency
4. Being rich in good works / abounding in every good work

The messages convey parallel ideas. What about the sound? In 2 Corinthians 9:8 after "God is able" is,

- ***pasan charin***
- ***perisseusai eis hymas, hina en***
 - ***panti***

- ***pantote***
- ***pasan autarkeian echontes***
- ***perisseuēte eis***
 - ***pan ergon agathon,***

Paul then repeats the idea in 9:11a as “***en panti ploutizomenoi eis pasan haplotēta***”

Paul uses the percussive “p” repetition again. As compared with our passage, he even intensifies it. Paul’s fundraising message is interruptive. It disrupts. It spurs. It breaks through.

Paul’s interruptive soundtrack

We can learn a bit about messaging from these word sounds. Paul’s percussive “beatboxing” grabs attention. It’s an interruption. Fundraising must grab attention. Fundraising is often interruptive. People don’t naturally wake up and think,

“I sure hope someone asks me for a donation today!”

In sales terms, charitable giving is often a product that “is sold, not bought.” It requires a prompt, a spur, or an offer. It requires instructing.

Paul’s message is interruptive. It interrupts the normal, habitual, lifelong process of wealth accumulation. It interrupts unexamined wealth holding. It says,

“Now, right now – at this opportune moment – is the time to decide what to do with your wealth.”

It’s an extreme, interruptive message. It comes with an extreme, interruptive soundtrack. Effective fundraising sometimes needs to interrupt. Sometimes we have to prompt,

spur, ask, or offer.³² That's part of the Biblical fundraising process. It's even part of the Biblical fundraising sound.

Paul as fundraising copywriter

Paul's fundraising writings weren't simply business letters. They weren't just plain prose. They used a fascinating poetic structure called chiasmus.³³ They obsessively employed positive alliteration. They were lyrical. They created sound effects.

And how does this matter for real-world fundraising? It gives us a scriptural example of fundraising communication. This is not just a literary curiosity. It's practical.

Charity leaders often prefer ponderous, lengthy, abstract donor messages. They communicate complexity. This might even feel like a more "proper" way to motivate a Christian audience. In this view, a jingle, rhyme, tagline, or catchphrase is out of place. It cheapens the message. It's too slick. It's too salesy. It's Madison Avenue.

And yet, this is what scripture does. When Paul instructs Timothy on fundraising, we see these elements. When he writes his own fundraising letter, we see them again. Paul's message is lyrical. It's punchy. It's poetic. It's like a modern jingle. He alters phrases to make them match a beat.³⁴ He not only creates new catchphrases – he even creates new words!³⁵

Communicating this way is hard work. It's harder to write a song lyric than an e-mail. Creating a memorable tagline with a catchy, pleasing sound is not easy. But if we model Paul's practice, it's necessary. Imitating scripture in fundraising can include imitating these communication strategies.

And here's the thing. It's effective. Having once heard, "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers," we can never unlearn it. It's sticky. Paul's methodology isn't just cute. It works.

Modern research confirms this. One experiment found, "Words that begin with plosives are more frequently recalled and recognized."³⁶

An experiment with brand names found the same. Recall was significantly higher for brand names beginning with an initial plosive.³⁷ This is not just an English-language phenomenon. A Korean study found that

"Korean brand names beginning with plosives also elicit higher recall and recognition."³⁸

Thus, it's no surprise to see marketers using initial plosives. A study of brand names found that plosives were the most common creative device.³⁹ Another labeled it the second most common linguistic device among top brand names.⁴⁰ Another found 93 of the top 200 US brands started with a plosive.⁴¹

Of course, plosives aren't the only semantic strategy. Paul's fundraising messages used many types of wordplay. Modern experimental research finds that wordplay (paronomasia) enhances recall.⁴²

What's the point? Carefully crafted, persuasive fundraising communication is scriptural. The most effective, cutting-edge, research-based strategies of modern advertising are not new. They're 2,000 years old. Using them doesn't contradict Biblical fundraising. It copies Biblical fundraising.

PART III:

THE MYTH AND TRUTH OF GEORGE MÜLLER

(Message 6: Now is the time to decide what to do with your temporary wealth!)

Make the offer

The ministry of major gift fundraising makes attractive offers. It offers wonderful donor benefits. It's not a simple ask based only on need. It's not begging. It's a beneficial offer.

But it is an offer. It is a call to adventure. This ministry of major gift fundraising is not simply "friend-raising." It's not just being social. It includes a call to share generously. It emphasizes that now is the time to decide.

We can present these opportunities in many ways. We can be creative in our instruction. However we do it, we need to make the offer. We're not just "coming alongside" [*para*] the donor. We're "coming alongside" them to deliver a message [*para-angelle*]. It's a message intended to create action.

In 1 Timothy 6:18, we want the donor to do "good works."⁴³ These are the same "good works"⁴⁴ as in Hebrews 10:24. There, we must "spur on,"⁴⁵ "motivate,"⁴⁶ or "stir up"⁴⁷ one another. In either case, the reality is the same. If we want this result, we have to do something. We must do something to trigger those good works.

We want the donor to do things. If our path isn't getting there, we need to change direction. This might require some thought. As in Hebrews 10:24, we may need to "think of ways

to motivate.”⁴⁸ We may need to “consider [thoughtfully] how we may encourage.”⁴⁹

However we do it, the goal is to get them to act. This means we need to motivate. We need to provoke. We need to encourage and invite. We need to stir up and spur. We need to instruct with an authorized message. We need to make the offer.

The myth of George Müller

Of course, it’s easier to do nothing. It’s easier not to provoke, motivate, encourage, invite, stir up, or spur. It’s easier not to instruct. It’s certainly easier not to keep on instructing constantly, as the tense of “instruct” [*parangelle*] in 1 Timothy 6:17 implies.

Sometimes, to avoid doing something hard, we look for excuses. We look to stories rather than scripture. We look to fables, myths, and legends. We embrace fiction that promotes inaction.

In Christian circles, one such fable is the myth of George Müller. Of course, he was a real person. He was a famous evangelist and writer in the 1800s. He also ran a large orphanage. He was real, but the stories often told of his fundraising approach are not.

The myth is that Müller raised money only by secluded prayer. He didn’t share needs. He didn’t encourage donations. He didn’t fundraise. He simply prayed, and the money came.⁵⁰

This myth is attractive. It removes the “work” part of “work and pray.” It excuses inaction. It even makes inaction appear spiritual. The myth of Müller is attractive. But it’s false.

It's not just that it conflicts with Paul's fundraising messages. It's that it simply never happened.

The truth of George Müller

We can't learn from the fundraising myth of Müller because it's a myth. But we can learn from the fundraising truth of Müller. He was an effective fundraiser. He used effective fundraising strategies. He raised over 1.5 million British pounds in the 19th century. So, how did he do it?

His orphanage became world famous through his speaking and writing. He spoke to massive audiences across at least 42 countries.⁵¹ He published a popular ongoing multi-volume diary of the work of the ministry.⁵² He widely distributed his Annual Report of the Orphan Institution.

As with most myths, this fable has a kernel of truth. At his sermons, Müller did not take up collections. He did not hold out a cup and say,

“Please give.”

So, what did he do? In his speaking and writing:

- He talked about the work of the ministry.
- He talked about specific needs of the ministry.
- He talked about the impact of specific gifts to the ministry.
- He shared stories about specific donors to the ministry.

And then, he did not directly request funds from the audience. Instead, he directly shared with the audience his request to God for funds.⁵³ It was this last twist that led D. L.

Moody to write,

“His emphasis on making no appeals was itself an appeal.”⁵⁴

How to “not ask” like George Müller

What did Müller’s “not asking” look like? In this example, he publicly shares his request to God for donations. It’s a request for donations to his orphan house in Bristol, England. He describes for his audience his prayer to God for donations. He explains,

“Now, if so, He can influence His people in any part of the world, (for I do not look to Bristol, nor even to England, but to the living God, whose is the gold and the silver,) to entrust me and brother Corser, whom the Lord has made willing to help me in this work with the means. Till we have them, we can do nothing in the way of renting a house, furnishing it, and so forth... Any donations will be received at my house. Should any believers have tables, chairs, bedsteads, bedding, earthenware, or any kind of household furniture to spare, for the furnishing of the house; or remnants or pieces of calico, linen, flannel, cloth, or any materials useful for wearing apparel; or clothes already worn; they will be thankfully received.”⁵⁵

Müller didn’t simply pray to God in seclusion and wait for money. Instead, he openly published his specific requests to God. He publicly shared his specific requests for specific gifts to be delivered to a specific location to fund a specific project.

His Annual Report of the Orphan Institution included reprints of his letters to individual donors. One such reprinted

letter concerning a donation ends with,

“Delay then no longer, even as also you have no desire to delay: and the Lord will bless you abundantly in doing so, inasmuch as you do it unto Him. As you desire to entrust me with this money, I do not refuse it, knowing many ways to lay it out for Him. Etc.’ Then only follows the direction how the money is to be paid into my bankers hands.”⁵⁶

By these methodologies, he effectively communicated his fundraising requests to his large audience. He was also a master at

- Constantly broadcasting powerful, visualizable impact from specific gifts
- Providing massive publicity of specific donor gifts
- Sharing compelling, motivational donor stories of other donors who had made gifts
- Delivering the most amazingly attractive donor experiences

Müller’s gift and impact publicity

Müller extensively publicized each donor’s gift. He listed each gift in the widely circulated annual report. He also described each gift in his highly popular book series⁵⁷ chronicling the work of the ministry. This series discussed the orphanage ministry. But mostly, it reported every donation on every day. And it often described the gift’s impact. Example entries read,

“Oct. 30. As this is Saturday, the money which came in yesterday was not quite enough for today. But this morning’s post brought, in answer to prayer, from

Clapham 10 shillings and anonymously from Plymouth 10 shillings.”

“Feb. 10. There came in yesterday and the day before several small donations; also by post, anonymously, a sovereign and a diamond ring from Leamington; but we are now again without means. May the Lord help us!”⁵⁸

With the precise day, amount, type, and origin of each gift, donors could read of the exact impact of their specific gift. Often, that impact was compelling and visualizable. For July 6, he details gifts such as,

“from Tottenham: a gold coin of James I.”

This is followed with

“By the donations of yesterday and today I am enabled to meet many needful expenses, such as ordering oatmeal from Scotland, buying peas, rice, Scotch barley, materials for boys clothes, & such.”⁵⁹

Müller’s inspiring donor stories

Müller widely publicized each gift. He also shared detailed donor stories. Of a large gift of £100, he writes,

“A. L., the donor, ... earned her bread by needlework, by which she gained from 2 to 5 shillings per week; ... her father had died, through which event she had come into the possession of £480, ... Shortly after this she sent me the £100 towards the Orphan-House. ... When I remonstrated with her, in order that I might see, whether she had counted the cost, she said to me: ‘The Lord Jesus has given His last drop of blood for me, and should I not give Him this £100?’ She likewise said: ‘Rather than the Orphan-House should not be established, I will give all the money I have.’”⁶⁰

Müller shared many such inspiring donor stories. He frequently included the donors' own letters detailing their stories. For example, he writes,

“Today I received the following letter

‘Dear Brother,

I yesterday happened to meet with one of your Reports of the Orphan Institution... Just before I fell in with your Report, I got a little portable money out of the bank, thinking it might be needed in some such way, so without delay I enclose it; the amount is £15, and I hope that the Lord will direct my mind and incline my heart to help you again at the time of need. I perceive you have a list with the sums received, and the names of the donors open for inspection (though not published, which is well). Please to insert my donation, and any future ones I may give, under the initials A. B.”⁶¹

And why did Müller publish volume upon volume of these stories of donors and their gifts? He explains it to his readers plainly, writing,

“I affectionately beseech you, not to take these instances as a matter of course. Say not in your heart, this is a charitable Institution; persons know that the maintenance of these many Orphans, and the support of these Day Schools, etc., costs much money; and therefore they will contribute. Nor suffer Satan to rob you of the blessing which the account of the Lord's faithfulness to us, and His readiness to listen to our supplications is calculated with God's blessing, to communicate to you, by allowing him to whisper into your ears, that, because the Report are read by many, donations will of course be coming in ... Dear reader, it is not thus... Suppose, the expenses are great, but very

little comparatively is coming in. What shall we do now?"⁶²

These are among the many ways Müller “did not ask” for money. We would do well to motivate others so persuasively to generosity by our own “not asking!”

¹ Campbell, J. (2004/1949). *The hero with a thousand faces (commemorative ed.)*. Princeton University Press. p. 45.

² McKee, R. (1997). *Story: Substance, structure, style and the principles of screenwriting*. Regan Books. p. 191.

In describing a scale “for measuring the degree of good storytelling,” Woodside notes, “The story has an inciting event (a crisis or turning point) involving the protagonist, along with a beginning and a resolution;” Woodside, A. G. (2010). Storytelling theory and research. In *Case study research: Theory, methods, practice* (pp. 41-83). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

See also “A good story displays tension that includes one or more inciting incidents preceded by conditions or settings that initiate the unconscious/conscious identification of one or more goals, with actions by a protagonist and possibly additional actors resulting in an outcome;” Woodside, A. G., Sood, S., & Miller, K. E. (2008). When consumers and brands talk: Storytelling theory and research in psychology and marketing. *Psychology & Marketing*, 25(2), 97-145. p. 101.

³ Snyder, B. (2005). *Save the cat! The last book on screenwriting you'll ever need*. Michael Wiese Productions. [At the time of this writing, Amazon.com listed this book as the best seller in the screenwriting category.]

Timothy Stout describes the Catalyst as “The moment where life as it is changes. It is the telegram, the act of catching your loved-one cheating, allowing a monster onboard the ship, meeting the true love of your life, etc. The “before” world is no more, change is underway.” [<https://timstout.wordpress.com/story-structure/blake-snyders-beat-sheet/>]

⁴ Robert McKee defines the inciting incident with a section labeled, “The protagonist must react to the Inciting Incident.” McKee, R. (1997). *Story: Substance, structure, style and the principles of screenwriting*. Regan Books. p. 191.

⁵ In defining the inciting incident, Robert McKee notes, “A refusal to act, however, cannot last for very long, even in the most passive protagonists of minimalist Nonplots.” McKee, R. (1997). *Story: Substance, structure, style and the principles of screenwriting*. Regan Books. p. 192.

⁶ For a review, see James III, R. N. (2021). Understanding the ask as story: The “inciting incident” in fundraising story. In *The storytelling fundraiser* (pp. 191-208). Independently published. <https://www.encouragegenerosity.com/TheStorytellingFundraiser.pdf>

⁷ See, e.g., experimental research that “showed that participants remembered negative emotional words better than positive or neutral words. The reason for this, according to past research literature, is that negative emotional stimuli are more efficient in capturing attention because they are better processed at a pre-attentional level.” Ferreira, P., Rita, P., Rosa, P., Oliveira, J., Gamito, P., Santos, N., Soares, F. & Sottomayor, C. (2011). Grabbing attention while reading website pages: the influence of verbal emotional cues in advertising. *Journal of Eye Tracking, Visual Cognition and Emotion*, 1(1), 64-68.

⁸ See, e.g., Bae, M. (2021). The effect of sequential structure in charity advertising on message elaboration and donation intention: The mediating role of empathy. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 27(1), 177-209.

⁹ “Our results point out that a short deadline, and not specifying a deadline, signals urgency. By contrast, providing a longer (one month) deadline gives people

permission to procrastinate, with people ultimately forgetting.” [Knowles, S., Servátka, M., Sullivan, T., & Genç, M. (2017). *Deadlines, procrastination, and forgetting in charitable tasks: A field experiment*. SSRN. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2576625>].

¹⁰ Woodside, A. G., & Megehee, C. M. (2010). Advancing consumer behaviour theory in tourism via visual narrative art. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(5), 418-431. p. 421.

¹¹ Bonnington Jr., R. G. (2014). *Pale statue* (Thesis). University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

¹² “The second part of the story takes off when something new happens. An event disrupts the homeostasis. Some literary theorists refer to this event as the ‘inciting incident’ (McKee, 1997). Daniel Stern (2004), in his analysis of micro-incidents in psychotherapy, calls it simply ‘trouble.’” [Goldin, D. (2008). Tone as a measure of the relationship in psychotherapy and other co-narrative experiences. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Self Psychology*, 3(1), 65-83. p. 67.]

¹³ McKee, R. (1997). *Story: Substance, structure, style and the principles of screenwriting*. Regan Books. p. 192.

¹⁴ McKee, R. (1997). *Story: Substance, structure, style and the principles of screenwriting*. Regan Books. p. 192.

¹⁵ Professor William Rhys Roberts explains, “The extraordinary sensitiveness of Greek audiences to the music of sounds is described by Dionysius, who also indicates the musical intervals observed in singing and in speaking, and touches on the relation borne by the words to the music in a song.” [Roberts, W. R. (1910). Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *On literary composition*. Dalcassian Publishing Company. p. 40.]

Dionysius’s book, *On Composition*, appeared a few years before the birth of Christ. In it, he explains that “the science of public oratory was a musical science, differing from vocal and instrumental music in degree, not in kind.” *Id.*

¹⁶ See, e.g., “Paul writes to his co-worker Timothy with the intention of having the letter read to all the congregations under Timothy’s watch care.” [Sheldon, M. E. (2012). *The Apostle Paul’s theology of good works: With special emphasis on 1 Timothy 6:17-19* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 143]; Similarly, Malherbe maintains that early Christian writing was intended to be read aloud. [Malherbe, A. (1986). *Moral exhortation: A Greco-Roman sourcebook*. Westminster, p. 68.]; This was the common practice in antiquity. See, e.g., “historical sources warrant the conclusion that, when letters in antiquity were received, they were not read silently as is done today, but were generally read aloud” [Verbrugge, V. D. (1992). *Paul’s style of church leadership illustrated by his instructions to the Corinthians on the collection* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Notre Dame. Mellen Research University Press. p. 201]; “It can be said, without exaggeration, that ‘all classical Greek authors composed for the ear.’ ... it is likely that all of the compositions of the NT were written expressly for public, oral performance.” [Aune, D. (1986). The apocalypse of John and the problem of genre. *Semeia*, 36, 77-78]; “Paul’s letters acted as a substitute for the writer’s presence and were oral (or perhaps, ‘aural’) in their immediate context. His letters were a way of bringing the speech, instead of the speaker, to the audience. They were read out loud to the audience by the letter carriers – those mentioned in the opening greeting – who acted also as interpreters of his thought and messengers to the audience when they didn’t understand something or didn’t react to the effect Paul tried to create.” [Hester, J. D. (1996). The invention of 1 Thessalonians: A proposal. In S. E. Porter & T. H. Olbricht (Eds.),

Rhetoric, Scripture and theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria conference (pp. 251-279). JSOT Press. p. 253-254.]

¹⁷ We're familiar with the modern phrase, "You can't take it with you when you die." A Google search shows over a half million results from this phrase in quotations. So was Paul. He was familiar with it because it comes from the Psalms. Psalm 49:17 describes the rich man with "he cannot take it with him when he dies." (Good News Translation). Or, more literally, "For when he dies he will carry nothing away;" (ESV). Similarly, Polycarp quotes this line in his letter to the Philippians in the early second century. [See Lookadoo, J. (2017). Polycarp, Paul, and the letters to Timothy. *Novum Testamentum*, 59(4), 366-383.]

¹⁸ The word sequence in 6:7 is:

ouden gar

- *eisē-nen-kamen* [we brought in]
- *eis ton kosmon* [we carry out]
 - *hoti*

oude

- *exe-nen-kein*
 - *ti*

¹⁹ These words (with emphasis added) are

- *Pagida* "trap"
 - "a. properly, of snares in which birds are entangled and caught.
 - b. [as a trope or figure of speech], a snare, i.e. whatever brings peril, loss, destruction: of a sudden and unexpected **deadly peril**". [Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 472.]
- *Blaberas* "harmful"
 - injurious, hurtful. Mark 16:18a, "they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any **deadly poison**, it will not harm [*blapsē*] them;"
- *Bythizousin* "plunge"
 - Frequently translated here as "**drown**." See, e.g., "hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition." (ASV); "harmful desires that drag them down and destroy them." (CEV); "which pull them down to ruin and destruction." (GNT).
- *Olethron* "ruin"
 - ruin, doom, destruction, **death**. "From a primary *ollumi* (to destroy; a prolonged form); ruin, i.e. **Death**, punishment -- destruction. from (Homer), Herodotus down, destructive, **deadly**". [Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. p. 443.]
- *Apōleian* "destruction"
 - destruction, ruin, loss, **perishing**. From *apōllymi*, "**to die**, with the implication of ruin and destruction". [Louw, J. P. & Nida, E. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains*. United Bible Societies. 1, 23.106.] In the KJV (from *Textus Receptus*), "It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man **to die** [*apōleian*]" Acts 25:16b. Also, in Acts 8:20b "May your silver **perish** [*apōleian*] with you".
- *Kakōn* "evil"
 - bad, evil. "Don't **kill** [*kakōn*] yourself" Acts 16:28b (NLT). In other versions, "harm" or "injure."

- *Periepeiran* “pierced”
to put on a spit, hence, to pierce. **Impaled.** [Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., & Jones, H. S. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon* (9th ed.). Clarendon Press.]; “he impaled [*periepeiranta*] on his spear and thrust on high the head of an aged man,” (Plutarch, Galba 27.3).
- *Odynais* “griefs”
Consuming grief, pain, distress, sorrow.
From the Septuagint: “And it came about, as her soul was departing (for she **died**), that she named him Ben-oni [the son of my sorrow: *odynes*];” (Gen 35:19a); “when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will **die**. So your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant, our father, down to **Sheol** in sorrow [*odynes*].” (Gen 44:31); “The snares of **death** encompassed me and the terrors of **Sheol** came upon me; I found distress and sorrow [*odynen*].” (Psalm 116:3).

²⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus references the plosives used in Homer’s most extreme scene in the *Odyssey*: men being smashed by the Cyclops. Professor Alex Purves explains, “‘The most unpleasant and ill-sounding letters’, which are nowhere ‘smooth or attractive’ in their arrangement, are here captured in the sequencing of the plosive consonants, κ, π, and τ [k, p, t]. Although Dionysius does not mention this, it is only after the smashing is over that the sounds in the sentence begin to level out and ‘flow,’ with the gentle p [r] sounds and open vowel patterns...” [Purves, A. (2020). *Rough reading: Tangible language in Dionysius’ criticism of Homer*. In J. Grethlein, L. Huitink, & A. Tagliabue (Eds.), *Experience, narrative, and criticism in ancient Greece: under the spell of stories*. Oxford University Press, USA. p. 185.]

²¹ “We may agree, for example, that the plosive consonants κ τ π [k, t, p] and the fricative σ [s] will tend to produce a harsh effect when used in close series, while the liquids λ μ ν [l, m, n] will tend to produce a smooth sound when so used.” Dionysius of Halicarnassus. (1985). *On literary composition*. In S. Usher (Trans. & Ed.), *Critical essays* (Vol. 2, pp. 1–202). Loeb Classical Library series (LCL 466). Harvard University Press. p. 8-9.

²² Commenting on Isaiah 24:16, one source explains, “The vb. דָּגַדַּג occurs 4x and the nom. דָּגָה once in Isa 24:16c, where the plosive quality of the consonants of the five words from the root דָּגַדַּג serves to hammer home the ugliness of the idea of plunder through deceit, cruelty, and oppression (Oswalt, 452).” [VanGemeren, W. (1997). *New international dictionary of Old Testament theology and exegesis*. Zondervan. (Citing Oswalt, J. (1986). *The new international commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah*. Eerdmans.)]

²³ Chiacchia, M. C. O. C. (2014). *The music in Garcilaso de la Vega’s poetry and his poetry in music: A musico-poetic interchange between sixteenth-century Spain and Italy* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Calgary (Canada). p. 98; Wiethoff, W. E. (1980). A classical rhetoric for “powerful” argumentation. *The Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 17(1), 1-10.

²⁴ Burton, B. (2004). ‘A forest of intertextuality’: *The poetry of Derek Mahon* (Thesis). Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1271/> p. 64

²⁵ Rees, K. (2022). *Victorian nonfiction prose: A companion*. McFarland. p. 68.

²⁶ For the idea of repeated plosives signaling aggression in literature, see, e.g., Witherick, M. (2017). *AS/A-level English literature workbook*. AQA A anthology: Love poetry through the ages. Hodder Education. p. 9. (Referencing “The Scrutiny” of Richard Lovelace.)

A study of business firm names finds “Names that start with hard plosives ... are associated with aggressiveness, power and dominance.” [Stoyneva, I., & Vracheva, V. (2022). Demystifying entrepreneurial name choice: Insights from the US biotech industry. *New England Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 25(2), 121-143.]

A study of brand names finds, “A plosive in the initial position especially carries weight ... Plosives are explosive sounds, which signify quick, forceful movements (Marchand, 1960). These sounds give a brand name inherent meaning of strength and power” [McCune, S. K. (2011). *Exploring the combinatory effects of phonesthemes in brand naming* (Thesis). California State University, Long Beach). p. 14. (Citing Marchand, H. (1960). *The categories and types of present-day English word-formation; a synchronic-diachronic approach*. C.H. Beck.)]

Another study explains that “voiceless stops were found to be more alive, daring, but associated with less luxury compared with voiced pairs. For instance, the first voiceless plosive of Pentium conveys energy, power and dynamism (Gabler 2015, Klink 2000: 10, Schrum & Lowrey 2007, Lowrey & Schrum 2007, for intercultural studies on phonetic symbolism cf. Schrum & al. 2012, Kuehnl & Mantau 2013)” [Rezegi, K. (2020). *The mental and neural representation of names: A cognitive and economic point of view*. [Conference paper]. The economy in names: Values, branding and globalization. University of Uppsala. June 3-5, 2019. <https://real.mtak.hu/114400/>]

²⁷ Wealth is temporary. It’s hidden and uncertain. Even the positive characteristics of the rich in verse 17 are framed in the negative. (They are not high-minded. They have not placed their hope in the uncertainty of wealth.)

²⁸ Beginning with “good works” in 1 Timothy 6:18: *ergois kalois* [good works] This is followed by four words ending with the harmonious: *-otous, -ikous, -ontas, -eautois*.

Next is the highly lyrical: *themelion kalon eis to mellon*.

Then the final three words finish with the rhyme-like endings: *-ēs, -ōs, -ēs*.

See, e.g., “note the assonance in the phrase *themelion kalon eis to mellon*”

[Witherington, B. (2006). *Letters and homilies for Hellenized Christians*. Vol. 1. IVP Academic. p. 297.]

²⁹ “The negative ideas of the previous verse are followed by four positive, joined two and two. - *agathoergein, ploutein en ergois kalois*” [Huther, J. E. (1885). *Critical and exegetical hand-book to the epistles to Timothy and Titus* (Vol. 9). (D. Hunter, Trans.) Funk & Wagnalls. p. 196.]

³⁰ 1 Timothy 6:17a (The Voice)

³¹ 2 Corinthians 9:8 (Weymouth New Testament)

³² Hebrews 10:24

³³ Chiasmus is “the use of inverted parallelism of form and/or content which moves toward and away from a strategic central component.” [McCoy, B. (2003).

Chiasmus: An important structural device commonly found in Biblical literature. *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal*, 9(2), 17-34.]; The chiastic structure of this passage is A, B, C, D, E, F, G, F', E', D', C', B', A' with G [“for enjoyment”] being the central point. See “Poetry with a point: Chiasmus” from “Enjoying wealth: Don’t miss the point,” Chapter 7-II, *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.

³⁴ See, e.g., the discussion of the 1 Timothy 6:19 phrase “*themelion kalon eis to mellon*” in “Let’s talk about wealth: Even more wealth words,” Chapter 4-II, *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.

³⁵ Both *eumetadotous* and *koinōnikous* in 1 Timothy 6:18 are newly constructed words that had never appeared in any recorded Greek text.

³⁶ Bergh, B. G. V., Collins, J., Schultz, M., & Adler, K. (1984). Sound advice on brand names. *Journalism Quarterly*, 61(4), 835-840.; See also a similar recall advantage in Cortese, M. J. (1998). Revisiting serial position effects in reading. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 39(4), 652-665.

³⁷ Lowrey, T. M., Shrum, L. J., & Dubitsky, T. M. (2003). The relation between brand-name linguistic characteristics and brand-name memory. *Journal of Advertising*, 32(3), 7-17.

³⁸ Park, H. M., & Park, J. Y. (2006). Analysis of Korean brand names: Initial sounds and memorability. *Proceedings of the 4th Int'l Joint Conference among KALM, ISTDOD, and BHU* (pp. 131-139).

³⁹ Plosives were used in about 85% of brand names, more than double that of any other strategy, such as functional descriptions, metaphor, assonance, alliteration, rhyme, acronyms, founders' names, etc. [Özbal, G., Strapparava, C., & Guerini, M. (2012, May). Brand Pitt: A corpus to explore the art of naming. In *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC-2012)*. European Language Resources Association (ELRA) (pp. 1822-1828).]

⁴⁰ Vanden Bergh, B. G., Adler, K. & Oliver, L. (1987, August/September). Linguistic distinction among top brand names. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 39-44.

⁴¹ Vanden Bergh, B. G. (1983). More chickens and pickles. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 22(6), 44.

⁴² Lowrey, T. M., Shrum, L. J., & Dubitsky, T. M. (2003). The relation between brand-name linguistic characteristics and brand-name memory. *Journal of Advertising*, 32(3), 7-17; McQuarrie, E. F., & Mick, D. G. (1992). On resonance: A critical pluralistic inquiry into advertising rhetoric. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19(2), 180-197.

⁴³ *ergois kalois*

⁴⁴ *kalōn ergon*

⁴⁵ Hebrews 10:24 (New International Version)

⁴⁶ Hebrews 10:24 (New Living Translation)

⁴⁷ Hebrews 10:24 (English Standard Version)

⁴⁸ Hebrews 10:24 (New Living Translation)

⁴⁹ Hebrews 10:24 (Amplified Bible)

⁵⁰ For example, the cover of the book "An hour with George Mueller: The Man of faith to whom God gave millions" shows a drawing of Müller looking skyward with hands clasped in prayer as currency and coins fall from the air. Sims, A. (Ed.), *George Mueller: Man of faith*. Moody Press. Cover. https://www.georgemuller.org/uploads/4/8/6/5/48652749/george_muller_man_of_faith.pdf

⁵¹ His autobiography recounts the astounding numbers. For example, "At Glasgow I began my labours by addressing a Convention of about 5,000 persons; and, as all could not hear me, I was requested to give the address again to an overflow meeting of about 1,200 in a neighbouring church. We stayed in Glasgow thirty-six days, during which time I preached thirty-eight times. Every Lord's day evening, for five weeks in succession, I preached at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, to about 3,000 persons each time." *Autobiography of George Müller*

<https://marcbuxton.com/2021/11/11/faith-alone-fundraising/>

⁵² Titled “A Narrative of Some of the Lord’s Dealings with George Müller”

⁵³ The indirect approach is not without parallels in our passage. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul presents a fundraising message. He does so by telling Timothy what Timothy should say to the rich Christians. But this message was intended to be read to the church. Thus, the rich would hear a message to Timothy about them. In this form, the giving challenge, like Müller’s challenge, was indirect. As a matter of Greek grammar, it was quite literally, indirect discourse. Also, in the passage itself Paul never asks for money. He never tells the rich Christians to just give money. Instead, he directs them to make a difference. He directs them to do intrinsically good works. He directs them to become rich in beautifully good works. Might executing such an instruction lead to giving money? Of course. But the request is indirect. It’s not a blunt, direct message of simply, “Give your money!” In this way, too, it parallels Müller’s indirect appeals of “not asking” for money.

⁵⁴ <https://marcbuxton.com/2021/11/11/faith-alone-fundraising/>

⁵⁵ Müller, G. (n.d.). *Autobiography of George Müller: A million and a half in answer to prayer*. Monergism.com. p. 134.

<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/muller/Autobiography%20of%20George%20Muller%20-%20George%20Muller.pdf>

⁵⁶ Müller, G. (2007). *The Project Gutenberg eBook of a narrative of some of the Lord’s dealings with George Müller*. Part 3. [The preceding paragraph explains that this was reprinted from the annual report of the orphan house. Thus, it would have appeared in both publications]

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/22148/pg22148-images.html>

⁵⁷ For example, in the preface to the eighth edition of volume 1, Müller mentions that “The Seventh edition of eight thousand copies is also exhausted.”

⁵⁸ Müller, G. (2007). *The Project Gutenberg eBook of a narrative of some of the Lord’s dealings with George Müller*. Part 3.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/22148/pg22148-images.html>

⁵⁹ Müller, G. (2007). *The Project Gutenberg eBook of a narrative of some of the Lord’s dealings with George Müller*. Part 3.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/22148/pg22148-images.html>

⁶⁰ Müller, G. (n.d.). *Autobiography of George Müller: A million and a half in answer to prayer*. Monergism.com. p. 134.

<https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/muller/Autobiography%20of%20George%20Muller%20-%20George%20Muller.pdf>

⁶¹ Müller, G. (2007). *The Project Gutenberg eBook of a narrative of some of the Lord’s dealings with George Müller*. Part 3.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/22148/pg22148-images.html>

⁶² Müller, G. (2007). *The Project Gutenberg eBook of a narrative of some of the Lord’s dealings with George Müller*. Part 3.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/22148/pg22148-images.html>

Story Elements

Climax & Resolution

(Victory & Altered Identity)

Chapter 9

Message 7: You're doing good work!

- *Biblical fundraising is about the donor's actions and impact.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is about the organization's actions and impact.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: **to do good**, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

DOING GOOD: THE DONOR EXPERIENCE

Doing good: How charities get it wrong

In this passage, what follows "for enjoyment" explains how to accomplish that enjoyment. It's the "how to" manual for wealth enjoyment.¹ Notice that it doesn't say to just give money. Instead, it starts with, "to do good." This Greek word references,

"a work or worker who accomplishes something ... a deed (action) that carries out (completes) an inner desire (intention, purpose)."²

Paul's instruction requires the donor to accomplish something. It requires the donor to complete something. It requires making an impact. That impact must match the donor's inner desires.

The instruction is “to do good.” It’s easy for a charity to think,

“Do good? We’ve got that covered! Just this year, we’ve done X, Y, and Z.”

But that’s not the instruction.

The instruction is for the donor to do good. That means the donor’s gift must do good. It’s fine if a charity does good, but it’s not enough. The instruction requires that the donor does good.

Suppose a donor gives but doesn’t know how his gift has done good. Can he say he has followed this instruction? No. He can’t say that he has used his wealth “to do good.” He can’t say what, exactly, his gift has done.

The donor is “to do good.” That requires the donor’s gift “to do good.” This means answering the donor’s question:

“I made a gift. What good did my gift accomplish?”

Or simply,

“I made a gift. What changed?”

At first, answering this might seem annoying. A charity manager can think,

“We’re doing good work, isn’t that enough? Why must the donor know what their one gift has done?”

It might feel like a hassle. But it’s necessary. It’s necessary in this scriptural instruction. And in fundraising, it’s powerful. It’s powerful for the charity, the donor, and the fundraiser.

It’s also not as hard as we might think. This passage is about gifts of wealth by the wealthy. It’s not about small gifts from disposable income. Wealth-sharing gifts are much larger.

Tying a specific outcome to a specific gift is easier for a larger gift.

Doing this makes fundraising more effective. Showing exactly how the donor's gift will "do good" motivates larger gifts. Showing how the donor's past gift has "done good" motivates repeated gifts.

Of course, just asking for money without a specific gift impact is easier. And it can sometimes work. But those gifts tend to be smaller. Large gifts usually do something specific. They do something visualizable and compelling. They do good.

Doing good: Delivering the donor experience

Paul's message describes a donor experience. It's an attractive experience. It spurs giving. It spurs repeated giving. It works. It works, but it's rare. It's rare because it requires a shift in the charity's mindset.

Charities like to talk about themselves. They like to talk about the charity's impact. Donors want to know about their gift. They want to know about their gift's impact. Charities like to talk about how the charity has done good. Donors want to know if they have done good.

This is not just a matter of Greek semantics. It's a key issue in modern fundraising. In 2023, the head of a leading major gifts consulting firm explained it this way:

"With several clients, we have surveyed both the donors and the fundraisers to understand their alignment. One question that continues to show separation is, 'What do you most value from the development department?' Or, when asked of fundraisers, 'What is the most valuable thing development offers to the donors?'

For the donors, ‘How my gifts are used’ is the top or among the top three in nearly every survey. ‘How a donor’s gifts are used’ rarely breaks the top three in the fundraiser surveys. The donor experience is the most valued and also most underinvested strategy in many development programs.”³

Donors want to know how their gifts have been used. Donors want to know if they have done good. Paul’s instruction describes a donor experience. That donor experience is all about the donor’s impact.

Focusing on the donor’s impact is important. Their personal agency in making the impact happen is key. Experimental research shows this is most powerful for one particular group of donors: the rich.⁴ These aren’t just experimental results. They’re also practical realities.

Josh Stamer works with clients of extreme wealth. His company serves as a philanthropic “family office.” It helps develop and execute their charitable plans. He explains,

“Our clients have a strong attraction to ‘I did that’ philanthropy. They want to be able to see meaningful results that allow them to know in their hearts, ‘I did that. I made that happen.’”⁵

A study of modern young entrepreneurs explained that they

“were interested in seeing immediate results and solutions to social problems and hence wanted to have hands-on involvement with the running of their supported organisations.”⁶

Another study noted that

“many of today’s donors ... want a precise explanation of how their money will be used. They also want the opportunity to choose how the money will be spent.”⁷

The ultra-rich, the modern young entrepreneurs, and even “today’s donors” want similar things. They want to make an impact. They want to have agency.

This, of course, is nothing new. People are not motivated to give money. They are motivated to do good. They are motivated to do good work.

Doing good: Donor impact = donor joy

Donors want to know about the impact of their gift. Did it accomplish anything? Did it do any good? In 1 Timothy 6:17-18, doing good is a means of getting to enjoyment. It’s a way to enjoy what God has richly blessed us with.

Giving that accomplishes something is joyful. Reporting the gift’s impact leads to joyful giving. It allows the donor to know what good his gift has done. Reporting only the charity’s impact doesn’t do this. It doesn’t explain what difference the donor’s gift made. It doesn’t explain how that donor fulfilled the instruction “to do good.”

Donor impact leads to donor joy. This is not just theory. Experimental research finds the same thing. One study reported,

“In an experiment using real charitable appeals, giving more money to charity led to higher levels of happiness only when participants gave to causes that explained how these funds are used to make a difference in the life of a recipient.”⁸

A fundraising expert describes the concept this way:

“Here is an experience of my own—when I received a personal update letter, and the rush of **pleasure and joy** when I learned about **the results of my gift.**”⁹ (Emphasis added.)

The “joy” comes from learning “the results of my gift.”

This reality leads to practical fundraising advice. Consider this practical issue. How can we get board members motivated to give? A book on the topic gives this guidance:

“If you can get them enthusiastic about what they are actively **accomplishing** through their work and their personal gifts, you will have lots more money coming from them. Like all donors, they experience **joy** when they see the **results** of their gifts.”¹⁰ (Emphasis added.)

One study tracked the step-by-step emotional states of donors during the giving process.¹¹ Describing a person in need created negative emotions. Next, providing an option to donate helped. It created “*anticipated* positive emotions.” Next, actually donating created emotions that were even more positive. But making the gift wasn’t the end of the donor’s experience.

If there was feedback on the gift’s impact, these positive emotions stayed high. However, without feedback on the gift’s usage, things changed. Negative emotions rose. Donors became more likely to report emotions such as being unhappy, distressed, or sad. Also, positive emotions fell. Donors became less likely to report emotions such as being happy or content.

In this experiment, giving brought enjoyment. But without reporting impact, that joy disappeared. With no description of the gift’s effect – or any gratitude resulting from its impact – the joy evaporated.

Confirming that a gift has “done good” makes it enjoyable. Showing that it accomplished something makes it fun. Without this feedback, a gift appears to change nothing. It appears to do nothing and accomplish nothing. That takes the joy out of giving.

This focus on donor enjoyment is not just scriptural. It’s also practical. In the experiment, providing donors with feedback on the impact of their gift increased positive emotions. But it did something else, too. It increased intentions to donate again. Not doing this had the opposite effect. Providing no feedback after the gift caused future donation intentions to plummet.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 has an instruction for the rich. It instructs them to use what God has richly provided to do good. A charity can help. It can be the donor’s powerful instrument of impact. It can help the donor to do good. It can help the donor to do good work that accomplishes something. This donor experience is enjoyable. Donor impact brings donor enjoyment. Donor enjoyment brings repeated donations.

But there’s a catch. The charity actually has to deliver this donor experience. Otherwise, the gift doesn’t fulfill the instructions. Any anticipated enjoyment evaporates. As enjoyment disappears, so does the motivation to give.

Doing good: Overcoming the trust barrier

Trust is critical for charitable giving. If people don’t trust a charity, they won’t give much. Paul’s fundraising campaign intentionally addressed this issue. It used well-known, trustworthy men. They oversaw the collection and distribution of the funds.

Donors could trust that their money would be used as

promised. Paul explained,

“taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of other people.” (2 Corinthians 8:20-21).

It wasn't enough just to act honorably. The administration also had to be honorable “in the sight of other people.” It was important to be able to see it.

Paul's fundraising campaign was for “restricted” giving. It was for a specific project. Donors needed to know that those instructions would be followed. They needed to see it.

Trust is still an issue in church giving today. One study of church donors explained,

“another reason mentioned to explain low levels of financial giving: administrative distrust. Numerous parishioners mentioned concern about how funds are used as a reason inhibiting their personal giving and perhaps giving by other Christians. Some expressed muted concerns, like ... ‘It's not clear how it would be used.’”¹²

Gifts with specific outcomes help overcome trust barriers. If my gift buys specific work and I can see that work, then I know it did good. I don't have to wonder or worry. I can see it. But if “it's not clear how it would be used,” then I don't know if my gift did good. I don't know what difference it made. I can't see it.

In experiments, lower trust in the recipient reduces giving. But there is a solution. Limiting the gift to specific tangible uses works. It increases giving, especially in a low-

trust scenario.¹³ It overcomes the trust barrier. When my gift creates a tangible, visualizable result, I know it made a difference. I don't have to have blind trust. I can see it. I can see the good work from my gift.

PART II

DOING GOOD: THE FUNDRAISER EXPERIENCE

(Message 7: You're doing good work!)

Doing good: Answering the “how” question

Paul tells Timothy to instruct the rich. Part of this instruction is “to do good.” This word references work that “accomplishes something.”¹⁴ But, how can the donor do this? How can the donor give in such a way that his gift will accomplish something? How can he give so that it will do good?

Answering this question is part of the job of instructing. An instructor must be able to explain how. Just saying, “Give money to our charity,” doesn’t answer this question. It doesn’t answer:

- Will this gift actually do good work?
- What good work, exactly, will this gift do?
- What will this gift accomplish?

Instructing “to do good” means answering these questions. Doing this also works in the real world. It makes fundraising more effective.

Suppose a fundraiser says, “Our charity does good work. Please give.”

- Does the donor know what work his gift is buying? No.
- Does the donor know what good his gift will accomplish? No.

- Does the donor know what his gift will do? No.
- Can this donor confidently say that he has followed the instruction “to do good”? No.

The fundraiser has asked for money. But he has not shown the donor how to buy work that accomplishes something. He has not instructed the donor how to do good.

A compelling ask explains exactly what the gift would accomplish. It shows the work the donor is doing. Constructing giving opportunities with specific, visualizable outcomes is powerful. It shows how the gift does good.

Doing good: Gifts that accomplish something

The job is to instruct. It’s instructing “to do good.” Suppose, instead, the job was instructing “to do math.” How might we do that? Probably, we would go beyond just lecturing on the concepts. We would provide opportunities to put the teaching into practice. We would provide relevant examples for the students to try it out themselves. Ideally, instructing “to do good” is the same. It comes with personally relevant examples and options.

An effective fundraiser knows many ways a donor could use a gift “to do good.” He knows many ways for a donor’s gift to accomplish something. He can match these answers with each donor. He can provide personally relevant examples. This helps him to be a compelling instructor.

In some cases, creating these options is easy. There may be specific, visualizable opportunities to do good in a way that accomplishes something. Funding new construction works well. The building costs \$X. A room costs \$Y. \$Z pays for 5% of this project.

But what about the boring stuff? What about utilities, maintenance, or administrative overhead? Using other funds to cover these costs and donor funds to cover the more compelling parts works.¹⁵ But we can also describe the expenses in terms of what they accomplish. We can describe how they “do good.”

For example, paying for “overhead” isn’t attractive. It doesn’t appear to accomplish anything. But what about “overhead to build long-term organizational capacity”? It’s still overhead. But it’s overhead that accomplishes something. In experiments, this slight wording change increased giving.¹⁶

Packaging such expenses together with more visualizable elements works, too. The entire package is what accomplishes the good. A gift for new construction is compelling. But so is a gift for a new “permanent” building, including a fund for utilities and maintenance. A comprehensive capital campaign works the same way. It combines overhead and operations with tangible construction goals.

Some ministries don’t have any specific tangible elements to sell. In that case, a per diem framing can work. For example,

“Each week this domestic violence ministry reaches over two dozen women in need. Your gift of \$4,800 will pay for an entire week. It pays for all the work like midnight rescues, answering the 24-hour hotline, counseling sessions, food, clothing, and shelter – down to every button and staple. \$21,000 covers a month. \$250,000 runs it for an entire year. \$5 million endows it permanently.”

This describes what the gift accomplishes. It makes the outcome tangible and visualizable.

George Barna studied church fundraising across America. What approach worked best? He summarized it this way:

“Donors must be put in touch with specific, tangible ministry goals that get them excited.”¹⁷

1 Timothy 6:17-19 describes a ministry. It’s a ministry of instructing. It instructs the donor to do good. The word references work [*ergon*] that “accomplishes something.” Work that accomplishes something is tangible and visualizable. This makes it compelling. Just asking for money doesn’t do this.

The effective instructor gives examples. He gives options and opportunities. He describes gifts in terms of what they accomplish. He doesn’t just ask for money. He asks donors to do things – to accomplish things – that happen to cost money.

This approach is effective. It makes the fundraising more compelling. It also does something else. It gives a tangible reason for a larger gift.

Doing good: Motivating big gifts

We can fundraise without describing what the donor’s gift will accomplish. We can just ask for money. We can simply say, “We do good work. Please give.”

This can generate a gift. But here’s the problem. This doesn’t motivate a gift of any particular size. Whether it’s \$100 or \$100,000, the gift doesn’t accomplish anything specific. One size feels like the other.

Such a gift just expresses general approval. It’s a “pat on the head” gift. It’s an “isn’t that nice for you people” gift. It doesn’t accomplish anything in particular. It doesn’t do

anything specific. Both the large and the small gift have the same vague outcome.

This changes when gifts are described in terms of what they accomplish. When a specific gift does specific good work, it creates a reason for a larger gift. Gifts are no longer just general expressions of approval. They're actually buying something. They're actually doing something. They're actually accomplishing something.

These gifts are different. They buy specific good work. They accomplish specific outcomes. Different outcomes have different price tags. The gift of \$100 does one thing. The gift of \$100,000 does something very different. This provides a reason not just to give, but also to give a specific amount. It provides a reason not just to give, but also to give big.

Doing good: Visual impact fundraising

Paul describes giving using “work” words. Literally, the term instructs the donor to “work good.” The donor also becomes rich in “good works.” Work is visualizable. It’s action. We can imagine it. We can picture it.¹⁸

So, too, when a donor’s gift does good, they should be able to visualize it. Numbers on a spreadsheet aren’t enough. It needs to be an experience. One book on major gift fundraising explains it this way:

“Remember that the role of an MGO [Major Gift Officer] is to experientially transport the donor right into the center of the problem the organization is addressing. If the MGO had a teleportation device, she could put donors in the middle of the action. They’d be able to hear, see, taste, and feel the experience. Until someone invents such a device, though, you must gather stories

that **take the donor to experience the sheer joy of seeing the need met.**"¹⁹ (Emphasis added.)

Experiencing the gift's impact leads to joy. We want the donor to feel that he is right there, doing the work. We want the donor "to hear, see, taste, and feel the experience." We want him to feel that he has done good work. We want him to feel rich in good works.

And what is the result? It's fundraising success. This is not just success in producing giving. It's success in producing joyful giving. This impact reporting leads "the donor to experience the sheer joy" of doing good. Doing good is the ultimate donor experience.

Helping the donor to know and to feel that they have done good is powerful. It's attractive. It works. It changes the donor's experience. It also does something else. It changes the fundraiser's experience.

Doing good: Putting the fun in fundraising

It's a simple idea. Fundraising is not about asking for money. Fundraising is about asking people to do good. As one fundraiser puts it,

"I don't ask people for money. I ask people to do things (that cost money)."

Asking people for money can be uncomfortable. Asking people to do good things is more enjoyable. This is true even if those good things happen to cost money. Just asking for money is all about loss, painful sacrifice, and maybe even begging. Asking people to do good things is all about impact, dreams, and enjoyment.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 describes the ministry of major gift fundraising. It has nothing to do with begging for money. Begging isn't fun. It's not a good deal for the donor. It's not fun for the fundraiser.

This ministry is different. The whole point is enjoyment. The goal is to get the wealthy person not to bury their wealth and die with it, but to enjoy it. The way to enjoy it is,

“To do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

Helping people to enjoy their wealth is fun. Helping people to use what God has richly provided to do good is fun. This ministry of major gift fundraising is fun. Norman Olshanksy describes fundraising this way:

“You will experience the joy of enabling people to achieve their philanthropic goals and dreams.”²⁰

This is not arm twisting. It's not high-pressure sales. It's helping people to accomplish something. It's helping people to do good. It's helping the donor to experience enjoyment. Linda Lysakowski explains,

“Motivating donors does not mean persuading donors to do something that they don't want to do or that is not in their best interest. Motivating donors comes through understanding that **philanthropy brings joy** to the donor and that if the donor really believes in the mission, motivation is simply a tool **to bring about the donor's wishes.**”²¹ (Emphasis added.)

Or as Paul writes in his fundraising appeal letter,

“But in this matter I give you an opinion; for my doing this helps forward your own intentions” (2 Corinthians 8:10, WNT).²²

The ministry of major gift fundraising delivers enjoyment. Instructing others how to have that experience is fun. It's even more enjoyable because the alternative is so depressing.

The alternative to enjoying wealth is burying it. Burying wealth isn't fun. Buried wealth is always at risk. Moth and rust destroy. Thieves break in and steal.

And if we make it through all the risk and anxiety, what is the reward? We get to die with it. We die with it, and it creates family fights over money. (Luke 12:13-21). We die with it, and then we have to explain to the one who richly provided it to us why we just buried it in the ground. (Matthew 25:14-30). That's a story with a sad ending.

The ministry of major gift fundraising offers a better story. It offers a better deal. It turns wealth into enjoyment. It does so by helping the donor to do good. This is fun for the donor and fun for the fundraiser.

PART III

DOING GOOD: THE CHARITY LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

(Message 7: You're doing good work!)

Doing good: Leadership barriers

Paul's fundraising message is compelling. It works. It's motivational for donors. Doing good work that accomplishes something is attractive. (Just giving money isn't.) Paul's message is also motivational for fundraisers. Asking donors to do good things is fun. (Just asking for money isn't.)

So why don't more charities and ministries do this? There's a problem. The problem isn't with the donor. The problem isn't with the fundraiser. The problem is with the charities' leaders.

In Paul's message, the donor gets to do good. This is attractive to donors. But it's not as attractive to charity leaders. Why not? Because it's not their story. And it's hard work.

Doing good: Leadership effort barriers

Suppose we embraced the message of painful giving. Donors are supposed to give until it hurts and then give some more. What obligation does this place on the organization's leadership? None. What kind of donor experience do they need to provide? None. What kind of cooperation or power-sharing with the donor is required? None.

This isn't a "good deal" for donors. But if we embrace asceticism in giving, it's not supposed to be. Instead, the

donor's experience is supposed to be painful. That's what makes it virtuous.

This painful giving is less attractive to donors. But it's quite attractive to leaders. It's attractive because it's easy. In the ascetic giving view, leaders have no obligations to the donor. They need not deliver any kind of donor experience.

Do the donors feel that they have done good? In the ascetic view, leaders can answer,

“It doesn't matter.”

They can answer,

“That's not my problem.”

Do the donors feel that they have become rich in good works? Do they feel that they have given well? Do they feel they are sharing with a mutual fellowship community, not just giving away to outsiders? Leaders can answer each question the same way.

“It doesn't matter.”

Or,

“That's not my problem.”

For leaders, this passive approach is easy. It doesn't require any effort. Leaders aren't trying to deliver a donor experience that's worth the gift. They aren't trying to deliver any kind of donor experience at all.

These attitudes don't make for attractive giving. They don't lead to major life investment gifts. They don't lead to joyful giving. But they also don't require much effort from leadership.

Doing good: Leadership story barriers

Effort is not the only barrier to delivering Paul's fundraising message. The other barrier is even deeper. It's a story barrier.

Paul's message is attractive to donors. But it's often not attractive to charity leaders. Why not? Because they are living a different story.

In their story, they get to do the good – not the donors. The charity leaders become rich in good works. They make it happen. They are in charge. They get to drive the car; donors are just there to fill up the tank.

In technical terms, this is a question of “agency.” This means: Who is the “person that acts to produce a particular result”?²³ In story terms, this is a question of the protagonist. Who is the story's main character?

Paul's story is a story about the donor. The donor does good. Yes, a donor might use a charity as an instrument of impact. A charity can be a useful hammer for the donor to swing. But the donor is the one who swings the hammer.

Charities often want to tell a different story. Their story is about the charity. It's about the charity's leaders and employees. It's about their impact. They are the ones who get to do good.

Which story is more compelling? For the charity leader, the charity impact story is more compelling. For the donor, the donor impact story is more compelling.

These stories conflict. They have different main characters. Different people hold “agency” in each story. Thus,

Paul’s fundraising message will conflict with the natural inclinations of organizational leadership. They won’t like this story as much. They won’t like this message as much.

Paul’s message won’t feel as compelling to leadership. It won’t feel as compelling because it’s not their story. They aren’t the protagonists. They don’t have agency. They aren’t in charge.

Leaders can even feel like they are losing ownership of the ministry. A study of Christian school fundraising explained, “donors also really enjoy helping to shape solutions alongside the nonprofits they support ... It is often easier for leaders to accept smaller gifts than to engage donors in true partnership.”²⁴

A study of successful fundraising in churches confirms this uneasy feeling. It explains,

“In today’s culture, people want to be active participants; they expect to be partners. People who own the ministry fund the ministry.”²⁵

Paul’s fundraising message can feel threatening to leaders. It contradicts the leaders’ story. They’re not the heroes. They’re just the hero’s hammer. They can feel like they’re just being the donors’ minions. They scamper about doing the donors’ biddings. That’s not a compelling story for leaders. So, now what?

Doing good: Leadership failures

We have a conflict. We have a conflict of stories. How do we manage this conflict? How can we present Paul’s fundraising message in a way that won’t offend leadership?

In rare cases, leadership will embrace this message. This is a less egoistic view. It says,

“We’re just here as an instrument for donors to use. We’re the donor’s hammer. Our job is to instruct them to pick up this hammer and use it. We want them to use this ministry to do good! We want them to use it to become rich in good works!”

But suppose that’s not your situation. Suppose the most important thing for your leadership is power and control. If so, then Paul’s fundraising message will generate opposition. The leadership may respond that

- They are supposed to be in charge, not the donor!
- They are supposed to be in control, not the donor!
- They are supposed to have power, not the donor!

Now what? One response is to drop the message. Instead, we just tell donors about the heroic organization. We talk about the great deeds of its employees and leaders. Then, we ask donors to give in honor of that greatness.

In this approach, donor instructions will never be allowed. All gifts must give all authority and power to the leadership. All gifts must be “unrestricted.” Leadership will love this approach. It’s the most ego-gratifying fundraising for them. And it will even generate some gifts. Small gifts.

Doing good: Real-world results

This is not just a snarky statement of opinion. This is an empirical reality. In experiments, allowing donors to restrict their gifts to specific uses increases giving.²⁶ Big gifts of wealth come with instructions. A 2022 study examined the largest

gifts made to over 1,000 colleges and universities. It found that,

“Only 14% of the gifts included unrestricted current use funding.”²⁷

Notice this didn't say that only 14% of these large gifts were unrestricted. It said that only 14% of these large gifts included even a single dollar for unrestricted, current-use funding. Big gifts of wealth come with instructions.

The most extreme form of gift instructions is the private family foundation. These involve pages and pages of legally binding instructions. They control the gift for decades or even generations. These also receive the bulk of the largest gifts. For example, estate gifts are gifts of wealth (not income). National data shows that for estates over \$5 million, 78% of all charitable bequest dollars go to private family foundations.²⁸

And what about estate gifts to religion? As wealth increases, the tendency to leave these gifts also increases. But these gifts never get big.²⁹ They remain in the “pat on the head” category. Religious organizations are good at getting estate gifts. Small ones. Actual wealth sharing goes to donor-restricted gifts.

For mid-range wealth, these large gifts go to education and healthcare. These institutions promote large donor-restricted gifts. They promote scholarships, professorships, or endowments to attack specific illnesses.³⁰ As wealth increases further, these large gifts shift to private family foundations. The level of donor control increases even more.

The impact of donor agency is easy to see if we change the context. Suppose churches treated volunteering in the same

way that they treated giving. A member might say,

“I want to volunteer to help with our outreach to the poor. Who do I talk to about that?”

The minister would respond,

“You don’t get to decide that. You just tell us how many hours you will volunteer. Then we’ll decide where to use your hours. That’s the only way the church can accomplish its overall goals. We can’t just allow people to volunteer wherever they feel like.”

Would volunteering increase or decrease with that approach? We know the answer. Would giving increase or decrease with that same approach? It’s the same answer.

Donor agency leads to large gifts. Organizational agency leads to small ones. That’s what the data shows. So, what if our organizational leadership is unwilling to cede any control? How can we still fundraise with a message of donor agency? How can we still focus on donor impact?

Doing good: Leadership solutions

The message of donor agency is not attractive to organizational leadership. It conflicts with their own desire for agency. So, what can we do? Often, we can translate this message.

Suppose the leadership has approved a budget. They are in control. If a donor wants to fund a specific item of that budget, this doesn’t change. The leadership is still in control.

These gifts are restricted. Yet, leadership doesn’t lose any agency. The gift still fits with the leadership’s ego and power needs. However, this translates the budget for donors. The budget becomes a series of giving opportunities. It

becomes a menu. Each accomplishes something specific. Each gift does good work.

George Barna's study of effective church fundraising explains a similar approach,

“creatively segment your fund-raising efforts into ministry modules and then encourage people to ‘buy’ into one or more of those modules ... relatively few people get turned on by throwing their comparatively limited donations into a giant ministry money pot.”³¹

But what about the rest of the budget items? What about boring expenses? Some can be covered by other revenue. Some can be included as part of a specific program's total cost. This works because the overall program is still visualizable and compelling. Bundling in the overhead costs changes the price, but it doesn't hurt the story.

Donor “restrictions” need not originate with the donor. The charity can intentionally construct a menu of attractive options. It can present those options to the donor.

Indeed, Paul's own fundraising campaign was for restricted giving. He was not raising funds for the church's general budget. These gifts were for a specific designated use. They were to benefit poor Christians in the church in Jerusalem.

Now, suppose the donor wants to do good that is beyond the budget. What then? Again, we need to translate. We don't present this as a power struggle between the leadership and the donor. That works against the leadership's ego and power needs. Instead, we present it as a competition with other

organizations. That works with the leadership's ego and power needs. For example,

“The donor wants to fully fund a new outreach to the homeless. They're considering giving another nonprofit the money to do this, but I would really like them to give it to us instead. What do you think? How should I advise the donor?”

Such framing can increase support for donor agency. But that can lead to another issue.

Doing good: Donor agency and mission drift

Donor agency works. It leads to large gifts. But it also leads to questions:

- Won't donor agency cause mission drift?
- Won't it make the charity scattered and unfocused?
- Won't it make the organization an ineffective mishmash of unconnected projects?

The answers are no, no, and no. At least they can be. Why? Let's start at the beginning. This ministry is not just a way to get cash to the organization. It's not a ministry to the organization. It's not a ministry for the organization. It's a ministry to the donor. It's a ministry for the donor.

How does that help? Consider this. Suppose the donor wants to do good thing “X.” But our charity isn't designed to deliver “X.” What's the response? It's this: Instruct the donor to do good. How? By giving money to our organization? No. That's the wrong instrument. Instead, we encourage giving to another charity.

The point is to instruct the donor to do good.³² Our organization is just one tool for the donor to use. It's not always

the right tool. And that's OK. It's OK because the point of the ministry isn't just getting cash for the organization. The point is to instruct the donor to do good.

In this ministry to the donor, the organization is just an instrument for the donor. It's like a hammer for the donor to use. A tight mission focus helps the organization be the best hammer it can be. And, yes, we want the donor to pick up the hammer and use it. We want the donor to use it to do good.

But sometimes, the donor wants to do good that needs a screwdriver. Or a wrench. What do we do then? We instruct the donor to do good. We don't try to get them to use our hammer as a wrench or a screwdriver. We point them to another tool.³³ Our ministry is not just to sell our hammer. Our ministry is to instruct the donor to do good.

This willingness to minister to the donor – not the organization – works. It not only works for the donor. It also works for the organization. It leads to larger gifts. When we stop selling the organization, we open up broader conversations about doing good. We get into discussions about wealth and philanthropic goals. We speak not to sell but to instruct and advise.

Doing good: What donor agency is not

In Paul's message, the donor uses his wealth to do good. The donor uses it to buy work that accomplishes something. The donor has agency.

However, the donor's agency applies only to his own wealth. He has no agency over other people's money. This issue can sometimes arise in fundraising. A donor may want to take control of other people's gifts. That's not donor agency. It's the opposite.

A donor may have an idea for a new project that's not in the budget. That's OK. But he only wants to fund 10% of it. That's not OK. That's not donor agency. That's giving the donor control over other people's gifts. That's not this story.

The decision to use other people's money isn't part of the donor's role. The donor gets to decide what he will do with his own money. If the donor wants to do this good work, that's fine. But he must pay for the work. Otherwise, he can fund part of a project that is already in the budget.

Doing good: Abundance vs. scarcity in giving

This instruction "to do good" is special. This Greek word had appeared nowhere else in any writings, except in one place. In Acts 14:17, it describes God's material blessings to us.³⁴ In 1 Timothy 6:18, it describes our reciprocal material blessings to others. The link is clear. God's doing good to us is the source of wealth (and all other things). Our doing good for others is the intended use of wealth (and all other things).

Giving doesn't remove a piece from a limited pie. Instead, it's part of a relationship of unlimited supply. The instruction "to do good" connects our giving to God's rich supply. This is a message of abundance. Giving is part of an ongoing abundance partnership.

This theme is consistent and repeated. In Paul's fundraising appeal letter, God will provide

"an abundance for every good deed" (2 Corinthians 9:8b).

And the donor

"will be enriched for everything for all liberality" (2 Corinthians 9:11a).

Scarcity giving is stressful. Whatever we give, we've lost forever. Abundance giving is joyful. It's not stressful because there will always be more blessings where that came from! This abundance mindset is key to joyful giving. It's also key to joyful – and effective – fundraising.

Doing good: Abundance vs. scarcity in fundraising

A scarcity mindset in fundraising sees a battle over fixed dollars. In this view, we would never advise a donor to give somewhere else. That means we lose. It means less money for our organization. We would never advise a donor to put instructions with their gift. That means fewer unrestricted dollars. It means less money for our plans. Again, we lose.

Scarcity fundraising is narrow and small. It fights for every penny. It fights against the donor's gifts to other charities. It fights against donor instructions with their gifts. It pushes a simple sales message:

Give us money!

It has a simple goal:

Get the money!

This is “fund-raising” as “money-getting.”

Abundance fundraising is the opposite. It's not about getting from the donor. It's about ministering to the donor. The goal is not “money-getting.” The goal is donor enjoyment. The goal is joyful giving.

Is it more joyful for this donor to fund this particular element of a project? Then let's do it! Make sure the donor puts those instructions with his gift! Is it more joyful for the donor to fund a project outside of our charity? Then encourage him to do that! Help him to do good elsewhere, too.

Why do we do these things? Because that's the ministry. The ministry is to the donor. Also, because that's the goal. The goal is the donor's enjoyment of what God has richly provided.

And here is the simple reality. Abundance fundraising works. Providing value to the donor works. Focusing on donor enjoyment works. A beneficial, caring partnership – a ministry relationship – works.

The goal is to minister effectively to the donor. It's about becoming the donor's guiding sage in his personal philanthropic journey. It's not about grabbing the cash. It's about encouraging generosity wherever it brings joy to the donor.

This ministry approach leads to broader conversations. It leads to global conversations about the donor's wealth. It leads to conversations about the most meaningful and enjoyable good works for that donor. These big, broad, beneficial conversations result in major life investment gifts.

Doing good: Abundance vs. scarcity in leadership

When organizational leadership promotes scarcity fundraising – it will get scarcity. When it promotes abundance fundraising – it will get abundance.

Scarcity fundraising focuses on shortages and impairment. It says,

“Give us money; we need it desperately.”

It generates small gifts. It leads to organizational “starvation cycles” and recurring crises.

Abundance fundraising focuses on strength and benefits.

It says,

“We are your strong, stable, effective instrument of impact. Use us to do good! Use us to make your biggest, most enjoyable, impact! We can help you do good work that accomplishes something personally meaningful.”

Paul’s fundraising message works with some leadership mindsets. And it conflicts with others. This conflict arises in a variety of ways:

- Paul’s fundraising relationship is a ministry relationship. This conflicts with organizations that see fundraising as money-getting sales.
- Paul’s fundraising message is a message of donor benefit. This conflicts with organizations that see fundraising as taking from donors rather than providing value to them.
- Paul’s fundraising message encourages the donor to do good work that accomplishes something as a way to enjoy their wealth. This conflicts with organizations that see giving as an automatic response to their past accomplishments.

Abundance fundraising works when leadership has an abundance mindset. It conflicts with leadership that has a scarcity mindset. Paul’s fundraising message is a message of abundance. It’s a message of donor agency and impact. It’s a message of donor benefit.

This abundance message is a challenge to the donor. It directs the donor to change his mindset about giving. But the abundance message can also be a challenge to the charity. It can require charity leaders to change their mindset about giving, too.

Embracing this message is powerful. It's powerful because the message is true. In fundraising, the message works. It motivates major life investment gifts of wealth. For the donor who embraces it, it can lead to a life of abundance. For the charity that embraces it, it can do the same.

¹ Professor Abraham Malherbe writes, “The infinitives thus describe how wealth is to be enjoyed, namely in the ways it is used: first, simply by doing good, stated in a verbal form (*agathoergein*) that captures the favorite *ergon agathōn* of the Pauline Epistles; second, stating the same thing with a similar favorite expression, *erga kala*, but explicitly describing the doing of such works as being rich in them (*ploutein en ergois kalois*); third, giving specificity to these general directions, to be generous and sharing (*eumetadotous, koinōnikous*).” [Malherbe, A. J. (2011). Godliness, self-sufficiency, greed, and the enjoyment of wealth 1 Timothy 6:3-19 Part II. *Novum Testamentum*, 53(1), 73-96. p. 89.]

² “To do good” is *agathoergein* from *agathos* (good) and *ergon* (work). The quote references *ergon*. Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.

³ Birkholz, J. & Lampi, A. (2023). *Benefactors: Why some fundraising professionals always succeed*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 151-152.

⁴ Kessler, J. B., Milkman, K. L., & Zhang, C. Y. (2019). Getting the rich and powerful to give. *Management Science*, 65(9), 4049-4062; Whillans, A. V., Caruso, E. M., & Dunn, E. W. (2017). Both selfishness and selflessness start with the self: How wealth shapes responses to charitable appeals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 70, 242-250.

⁵ Stamer, J. (2024, February 12). Personal communication [e-mail]. Josh Stamer, Chief Strategy Officer, Anonymous Philanthropy.

⁶ Kottasz, R. (2004). How should charitable organisations motivate young professionals to give philanthropically? *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 9(1), 9-27, p. 12. (Citing Grace, K. S. (2000). *High impact philanthropy*. John Wiley and Sons); Gorov, L. (1999, November 28). Spreading the wealth: Rich, young entrepreneurs, are turning to social activism instead of the typical charities with their time and money, *Boston Globe*. pp. A1:2; Price, C. (2000). *The internet entrepreneurs*. Pearson Education Ltd.

⁷ Braus, P. (1994). Will Baby Boomers give generously, *American Demographics*, 16(7), 48-52; Goodden, H. (1994). An enormous inter-generational transfer of wealth is imminent: How can charities benefit? *Front and Centre*, 1(3), 17-18. Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.

⁸ Aknin, L. B., Dunn, E. W., Whillans, A. V., Grant, A. M., & Norton, M. I. (2013). Making a difference matters: Impact unlocks the emotional benefits of prosocial spending. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 88, 90-95. p. 90.

⁹ Perry, G. (2007). *Fired-up fundraising: Turning board passion into action*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 89.

¹⁰ Perry, G. (2007). *Fired-up fundraising: Turning board passion into action*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 150.

¹¹ Merchant, A., Ford, J. B., & Sargeant, A. (2010). Charitable organizations’ storytelling influence on donors’ emotions and intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(7), 754-762.

¹² Smith, C., Emerson, M. O., & Snell, P. (2008). *Passing the plate: Why American Christians don’t give away more money*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.

¹³ An experiment allowing giving to “a smoking diabetes patient whose willingness to pay for nicotine patches is positive but below the market price” found that

“When subjects can donate both nicotine patches and money, more than 90% of the donations are given in kind rather than cash.” [Jacobsson, F., Johannesson, M., & Borgquist, L. (2007). Is altruism paternalistic? *The Economic Journal*, 117(520), 761-781];

Dr. Kristy Jones explains, “I find a higher proportion of donors choose to donate to a commonly negatively stereotyped recipient (Indigenous Australians) when they are able to [restrict their donations]” [Jones, K. (2017). Paternalism and ethnicity in giving. *Economic Record*, 93(302), 420-433.];

Another study found that gift restrictions were more attractive to donors focused on the impact of their gift on recipients. [Gangadharan, L., Grossman, P. J., Jones, K., & Leister, C. M. (2018). Paternalistic giving: Restricting recipient choice. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 151, 143-170.]

¹⁴ *Agatho-ergein* from *agathos* (good) and *ergon* (work). *Ergon*: “(from *ergō*, “to work, accomplish”) – a work or worker who accomplishes something ... a deed (action) that carries out (completes) an inner desire (intention, purpose).” [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.]

¹⁵ Gneezy, U., Keenan, E. A., & Gneezy, A. (2014). Avoiding overhead aversion in charity. *Science*, 346(6209), 632-635.

¹⁶ Charles, C., Sloan, M. F., & Schubert, P. (2020). If someone else pays for overhead, do donors still care? *The American Review of Public Administration*, 50(4-5), 415-427.

¹⁷ Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. [Kindle Edition]. Gospel Light Publications. p. 110.

¹⁸ One report found that simply changing the church’s budget to a “narrative budget” detailing the impact and cost of each area of ministry was effective at increasing gifts. One minister explained, “‘The narrative budget made all the difference for us’ ... ‘People really get a sense of where the money goes.’ The response was quite positive with givings up 28% over the past year.” Stewardship Development Department - Diocese of Toronto. (August, 2008). *A program to encourage sacrificial giving in your parish (4th Ed.)*. p. 3.

¹⁹ Perry, R. & Schreifels, J. (2014). *It’s not about the money: How to build authentic major donor relationships*. Veritus Group. p. 130.

²⁰ Lysakowski, L. (2010). *Fundraising as a career: What, are you crazy?* CharityChannel Press. Foreword.

²¹ Lysakowski, L. (2010). *Fundraising as a career: What, are you crazy?* CharityChannel Press. p. 28.

²² Weymouth New Testament

²³ "Agency." (2009). In *The Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford University Press.

²⁴ O’Connor, T. (2019). *Donor motivations for charitable giving: A capital campaign case study* (Doctoral dissertation). Trevecca Nazarene University. p. 19.

Referencing Cluff, A. (2009). Dispelling the myths about major donor fundraising. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 14(4), 371-377.

²⁵ Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. Gospel Light Publications. Table of Contents. Ch. 7. Partnership strategies.

²⁶ Helms, S. E., Scott, B. L., & Thornton, J. P. (2012). Choosing to give more: Experimental evidence on restricted gifts and charitable behaviour. *Applied Economics Letters*, 19(8), 745-748; Helms, S., Scott, B., & Thornton, J. (2013). New experimental evidence on charitable gift restrictions and donor behaviour. *Applied Economics Letters*, 20(17), 1521-1526; Li, S. X., Eckel, C. C., Grossman, P. J., & Larson, T. (2013). Who's in charge? Donor targeting enhances voluntary giving to government. SSRN. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2293407>

²⁷ Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A., King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 7.

²⁸ Raub, B. G. & Newcomb, J. (2011, Summer). Federal estate tax returns filed for 2007 decedents. *Statistics of Income Bulletin*, 31, 182-213. p. 191. <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/11essumbulestatereturns.pdf> [perma.cc/2FJZ-LV46].

²⁹ James, R. N. III. (2020). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning and Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285. Section III.D.

³⁰ Statistically, wealthy Christians tend to send their small gifts to the church and their large gifts to universities and hospitals (or at higher wealth levels to private family foundations). Church leaders are prone to decry this reality, essentially attacking the donors. But suppose we instead flip that responsibility. Does the university give the donor an opportunity for the donor to do good? Yes. For example, any donor can create a permanent named scholarship fund that will support specific types of students, giving those young people the chance at an education. Any donor can create a permanent named professorship endowment, guaranteeing that someone will always be researching a particular topic that has been important in the donor's life.

Paul's instruction is for the rich person to do intrinsic good work and to become rich in beautiful, noble, inspirational good works. The university offers many opportunities for donors to do exactly that. The church, in contrast, rarely does. Instead, it offers a message of "We do good work here. You should give us money so we can keep the lights on." Major gift fundraising at universities never uses that message. Instead, the message is about the donor using the university as an instrument for the donor to accomplish their charitable goals. The university is the instrument for the donor to do good. In this sense, the university allows the fulfillment of this part of Paul's instructions where the church might not. The rarity of major gifts of wealth to the church may reflect this absence.

³¹ In George Barna's study of effective fundraising strategies across America, he calls this menu approach "modular giving." He explains, "creatively segment your fund-raising efforts into *ministry modules* and then encourage people to 'buy' into one or more of those modules ... relatively few people get turned on by throwing their comparatively limited donations into a giant ministry money pot." Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church: A practical guide to the sensitive task of raising money for your church or ministry*. [Kindle Edition]. Gospel Light Publications. p. 111-112.

³² Despite the tendency of some authors to casually refer to this passage as describing giving to the poor, there is no such restriction in any of the four descriptions of giving action. The instruction "to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share" does not constrict one's philanthropic efforts only to poverty relief. As one commentary explains of this passage, "The expansion of the church through missions, growth in Christian educational institutions, and the building of healthcare institutions can often be traced to persons who

generously shared their wealth.” Zehr, P. M. (2010). *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus: Believers church Bible commentary*. MennoMedia, Inc.

³³ Or, to consider another analogy, suppose you want to open a restaurant. Suppose also that your goal is for diners to have a joyful dining experience. Does this goal mean you don't have a specific cuisine? No. Does it mean you don't have a specific menu? No. You need both. These help you to perfect the dining experience. And if your restaurant is Japanese fusion vegan and the customer asks for steak? You don't go cook a steak. That's not what you are good at. Other places do that better. So, you recommend another place that has great steaks!

³⁴ Acts 14:17, “yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good [*agathourgōn*] and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

Chapter 10

Message 8: You're making beautiful things happen!

- *Biblical fundraising is about creating beautiful, visible, noble works.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is only about redistributing money.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, **to be rich in good works**, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

THE FUNDRAISER AS ART DEALER

Beautiful good works

Timothy is to instruct the donor

"to do good, to be rich in good works" (1 Timothy 6:18b).

In English this repeats "good." In Greek, these are two different words. The first "good" [*agatho-*] is intrinsically good. The second "good" [*kalois*] is,

"beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so."¹

These good works are beautiful, noble, and honorable. Another lexicon describes the word as,

"attractively good; good that inspires (motivates) others

to embrace what is lovely (beautiful, praiseworthy); i.e., well done so as to be winsome (appealing).”²

One translation puts this phrase as

“to be rich in lovely works”.³

This is not just good in the intrinsic, analytical sense. It’s aesthetically good. It beautifully good. This type of giving is not primarily focused on technical efficiency, wealth redistribution, or almsgiving. This is something different. This is about bringing beauty into the world. It’s about bringing something noble and inspirational into the world.

Art dealer: The intermediary selling beautiful works

The donor is “to be rich in good works”. The donor becomes a collector of beautiful works. What is the fundraiser’s role? The fundraiser presents the donor with potential additions to his collection of beautiful works. The donor might purchase ready-made beautiful good works. He might fund new custom-made beautiful good works. Either way, the donor’s collection of beautiful good works grows.

The fundraiser is encouraging the donor to buy beautiful works. In a sense, he is selling works of beauty or “art.” The fundraiser is like an art dealer. An art dealer,

“acts as the intermediary between the buyers and sellers of art.”⁴

The fundraiser is this same kind of intermediary. He stands between the charity that creates beautiful works and the donor who can fund those works. This analogy provides a useful perspective for effective fundraising.

The donor is the owner

The fundraiser is encouraging the donor to buy beautiful works. This collection of good works becomes the donor's collection. The donor becomes rich in good works. This requires a transfer of ownership.

An artist can paint a picture, but he can't sell it without giving up ownership. Suppose you walk into an art gallery. It displays many beautiful, attractive paintings by its featured artist. You point to a favorite and ask,

“How much?”

The salesperson explains,

“Oh, you can't buy anything. The artist never gives up ownership. But you can leave your money. It will fund his new works.”

You reply,

“And then I would get the new work that I funded?”

The response is,

“No. The artist never gives up ownership. But you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you helped him do his work.”

How much art could you sell that way? Probably very little. And yet, fundraising often communicates the same idea. The messages don't give ownership of the good works to the donor. These are the organization's good works – not the donor's. Paul's message is different. The donors themselves become “rich in good works.”

Many charities do beautiful good deeds. Ask any charity leader. Likely, you'll hear many examples. But notice what's different. Their stories will convey how the organization is rich in these good deeds. That's not Paul's message.

Charity leaders want to do good work. But they think of it only as their good work – not the donors’ good works. In Paul’s message, it is not the organizational leader who becomes rich in good deeds. It is not the minister who becomes rich in good deeds. It is the donor who becomes rich in good deeds.

The charity is the donor’s instrument

In fundraising, it’s important to sell a beautiful work. It’s also important to deliver ownership of it. A donor gives. But what if nothing makes him feel like he owns the beautiful, good work? What if nothing makes him feel like he is responsible for the beautiful, good work? Then he can’t become rich in beautiful, good works. The beautiful work doesn’t get placed in his collection.

In the major gift fundraising story, the charity is still important. But it’s important as the donor’s instrument of impact. The charity is powerful. But it’s powerful as the donor’s magical weapon. It’s powerful like the hammer of Thor. The hammer isn’t the hero. The hammer is the hero’s instrument of impact. In fundraising, the charity is the hammer. The donor is the one who swings the hammer.

Small gifts go to an organization. Major gifts go through an organization. As one book explains it,

“Donors don’t give to you. Donors rarely give to your institution. They give to the hope made real in their gift. If it is a scholarship fund, they are giving to change the life of a future student. If they give to your research program, they are giving to the families spending more time with a loved one cured of a disease. If they donate land for conservation, they are embracing the joy of future generations enjoying nature. When they choose to give to you, they have decided you are a vehicle for this future hope and realized satisfaction.”⁵

Large gifts are given through a charity, not to a charity. The organization is the donor's weapon of impact. It's an instrument the donor uses. The donor uses it to create beautiful good works.

Major gift fundraising is not a weakest-link system. It's not giving to organizations with the greatest need. It's a strongest-link system. These donors "give to the best."⁶ They use the most powerful instrument of impact.

The successful art collector doesn't commission the artist who is in the most desperate need. He hires the artist who can produce the most beautiful works to add to his collection. No one gives money to Harvard because it needs money. They give because it's the right instrument of impact for their philanthropic goals.

The data reflect this. The largest donations go to the largest – often the wealthiest – organizations. And, it makes sense. These donors are using the most stable, reliable, lasting tools to accomplish their personal philanthropic goals.

The rich person's art collection

Throughout the centuries, a common characteristic of the rich has been spending money on art collections. The art collector becomes rich in beautiful works. This historical practice illuminates Paul's phrase in several ways.

Although the buyer doesn't personally create the works, they become his.⁷ The works belong to the collector. Beyond this, a rich person would often fund work in the role of patron. Historically, a patron would commission art to his, often exacting, specifications.⁸ He would not just buy his collection. He would "create" it.

The artist did not just sell works of art; he would follow the patron's instructions. Often, he would even incorporate the patron into the art itself. (This was done through inscriptions or painting the patron into a scene.⁹)

Art collecting among the rich is not just a historical phenomenon. J. Paul Getty, the world's richest person at the time, wrote a book on "How to be rich."¹⁰ In it, he emphasizes the responsibility of collecting art and patronizing the arts.

Private art collections can display wealth and good taste. The discerning, wealthy collector can become rich in beautiful works. Paul here uses similar language. The donor becomes rich in beautiful-noble-good [*kalois*] works. He becomes a collector. Over time, his collection of beautiful works grows. The donor becomes rich in beautiful works.

The myth of donor fatigue

In fundraising, you may hear the phrase "donor fatigue." This comes from the mindset that giving is a burden. In this view, the giving experience is not "worth" the gift. Fundraising is unpleasant but, alas, necessary. So, it's important not to bring up giving too often. Otherwise, it will cause donor fatigue.

Now, let's reverse that. Suppose the giving experience is enjoyable. Suppose it's actually worth the cost of the gift. Suppose it allows donors to actually do something good. Suppose it makes them feel rich in beautiful good works. Suppose it makes them feel generous and part of a fellowship community. Let's get even more extreme. Suppose it even allows donors to take hold of that which is truly life.

This is a great deal for donors. So, is it fatiguing? Of course not. It's not exhausting. It's enjoyable. Fundraisers

may talk of donor fatigue. But have you ever heard someone talk of Amazon fatigue? Have you ever heard people say,

“I hope Amazon and Wal-Mart quit offering all those products for sale! I’m just so tired of getting more stuff.”

Probably not. Why not? Because when we shop, we only buy things that are worth the price (or at least appear to be so). They’re a good deal. Otherwise, we wouldn’t buy them.

The art collection is plural

Shopping is attractive when the products are worth the price. It’s even more attractive when there are so many choices. Even if we intend to get only one thing, we come out with a basketful.

In 1 Timothy 6:18, the donor’s collection of beautiful works is plural. They don’t just have one. They have many. They have so many that they are rich in them.

If giving is truly a good deal for donors, is it fatiguing? No. Instead, it’s enjoyable. It’s fun. It’s even a little addictive.

So suppose we’re offering an addictive product. Let’s say it’s something safe, like caffeine. How do we increase consumption of it? We offer it in a hundred different ways. We offer it in coffee, tea, sodas, chocolate, and energy drinks.

If we are offering a giving experience that is worth the gift, then we are offering a good deal. We are offering an enjoyable experience. How do we increase consumption of it? We offer it in a hundred different ways. We help the donor to build a large and varied collection of many beautiful works.

This has practical implications for real-world fundraising. Joshua Birkholz’s team works with the largest

health and education nonprofits in the country. He explains the results of a research study:

“We studied the effect not only of multiple [gift] designations, but also multiple approaches. We analyzed prospects pursued only by one major gift officer. We compared these to prospects pursued by fundraisers from different areas of the organizations (different colleges of the university, different service areas in healthcare, etc.) ... Not only did the donors give more overall when compared to single-pursuit donors, they gave more to the first area of interest.”¹¹

These donors experienced a greater variety of offers from a greater variety of fundraisers at the nonprofit. The result was not fatigue. It was an increase in giving. It was an increase in overall giving. It was even an increase in giving in their initial area of interest.

A more technical research study showed similar results.¹² It analyzed 20 years of donations at a large university. It compared donors with the same total level of past giving. It found that those who had given to a larger number of different projects or parts of the university were more likely to

- Give again
- Give larger amounts when they did give
- Keep giving even when economic times turn bad ¹³

This matches the idea of the donors as collectors of beautiful good works. Which collectors are the most passionate about getting the next item? It's often those who have already built large and varied collections.

We want the donor's collection of beautiful good works to be plural. We want them to collect as many as possible. We

want them to be rich in their collection. This doesn't cause collector fatigue. It doesn't cause donor fatigue. It only increases the desire to add to their rich collection of beautiful good works.

PART II

BEAUTIFUL WORKS ARE VISIBLE AND COMPELLING

(Message 8: You're making beautiful things happen!)

Aesthetics vs. analytics

Paul's language provides insight into major gift motivation. The donor is "to be rich in good [*kalois*] works." This word for good is special. It's "beauty on display."¹⁴ It's "aesthetically good, beautiful, good to men's eyes."¹⁵ Paul's phrase refers to "good works that are bright and beautiful."¹⁶

The fundraiser is selling beautiful works. This means the donor must be able to see or imagine the work. It must be "visualizable." It also means something else. What the donor sees must be inspiring. It must be noble, honorable, and beautiful.¹⁷

Numbers, spreadsheets, and statistical efficiency are fine. But that's not what inspires large gifts of wealth. What inspires large gifts of wealth is a beautiful vision. A complicated story won't create this. It's too hard to visualize. If the donor can't visualize the result of his gift, the proposal won't be motivational.

The vision of the work the donor is buying must be clear. And that clear vision must also be attractive. This is an aesthetic issue, not an analytical one. One experiment demonstrated this in an interesting way. It asked people about donating to an environmental cause. It described the threat as

"fertility loss due to pollution threatens ____ on the Mexican coast".¹⁸

The share of people willing to donate was

- 24% for “reptiles”
- 34% for “turtles” [a specific reptile]
- 17% for “lizards” [a specific reptile]

Turtles are reptiles. But turtles make a more attractive picture than reptiles. Lizards are also reptiles. But lizards make a less attractive picture than turtles. When the vision became more beautiful, the willingness to donate doubled. Analytically, this doesn’t make sense. Aesthetically, it does. Selling a beautiful impact – a beautiful outcome – works.

Giving comes from vision in experiments

Scripture describes giving as accumulating visible, beautiful, good works. What does experimental science say? Where does charitable giving start? It starts with vision. This is not the leadership buzzword. It’s actual, physical, neurological visualization.

Several experiments demonstrate this. In one, people could give money to another person. When they could actually see the other person, the average gift size doubled.¹⁹

In another experiment, one group was asked to donate for a child in medical need. 61% gave. Another group was asked the same thing. But they also received the child’s name, age, and picture. In that group, 90% gave.²⁰

In another example, people could donate for an at-risk child in Africa. One group also received the child’s name and picture. This doubled the willingness to donate.²¹ That’s no surprise. But this experiment then went further. It dove deeper into the decision-making process. It asked detailed questions.

It applied statistical path analysis to uncover the decision sequence. The process was this:

STEP 1: Adding character details increased the clarity of the mental image.

STEP 2: This enhanced image increased sympathy.

STEP 3: This increased sympathy drove greater donations.

The mental sequence was:

Character details²² → Mental Image → Victim-focused emotion (Sympathy) → Donation

Creating a clear mental image leads to greater donations. This is true whether we're raising money for kids, construction, or concepts. Before donors feel something, they must see something.

Giving comes from clear, simple vision

In [The Storytelling Fundraiser](#), I summarized the latest research on effective fundraising. The results came down to this simple concept. Effective fundraising story

1. Evokes a clear image
2. That generates social emotion

The ability to do these two things is why story can be so powerful. As a matter of science, story does this better than other kinds of text. It creates more internal visual representations.²³

Of course, not all stories accomplish these goals. Not all stories work. Why not? One famous Hollywood scriptwriter gives a simple answer. He advises hundreds of storytellers and

business leaders. And he keeps seeing the same problem with their stories. Their number one problem is this:

“Their stories are way too complicated.”²⁴

Complexity won’t evoke a clear image. Without that clear image, the story can’t be compelling.

Fundraising starts with a clear image. Without a clear image, it can’t create social emotion. Without social emotion, fundraising won’t work. Complexity can’t evoke a clear image. That’s why complexity kills fundraising.

We see this in fundraising experiments. The story of one child in need is compelling. Donations will be high. A story about five children is more complicated to visualize. On average, donations will fall by about half.²⁵ A story about thousands is even harder to visualize. Donations will fall even further.²⁶

Analytically, this doesn’t make sense. Aesthetically, it does. As numbers increase, the picture gets fuzzy. It gets complicated. Researchers explain,

“As the number of victims increases, the mental representation becomes more diffuse and abstract until it is difficult to attach emotional meaning to it.”²⁷

A complicated story can’t create social emotion. Neither can a vague one. These don’t work because they don’t trigger visualization. Without visualization, giving will be weak.

This also applies to giving in the church. One in-depth study of church giving explained,

“it is important to hear that ... children in Africa are being vaccinated or a specific missionary is working in a specific place, rather than simply that the church is

supporting a lot of good ministries. Thus, many parishioners said they like the church to be specific about what the money is being requested for.”²⁸

This also applies to complex gifts. Gift structures in the US can get complicated. They can involve trusts, foundations, income taxes, capital gains taxes, estate taxes, income streams, and even a four-tiered accounting system. But complexity still kills fundraising.

Even with these structures, what works in experiments are simple words and stories. More technical, contract language reduces interest in such giving structures. Simpler, social language increases that interest.²⁹

Giving comes from visible gifts and visible impact

Charitable giving starts with vision. We can see it in fundraising experiments. We can see it in fundraising practice.

The key donor questions are about vision. Can I see the impact of my gift? Can others see the impact of my gift? If the answer is no, then making the gift didn't create a visibly good work. It didn't match Paul's language. It wasn't a visibly-beautiful good [*kalois*] work. This ancient phrase summarizes much of what we know from modern experimental research.

A 2023 study statistically summarized 1,339 published charitable giving experiments. These included over 2.1 million participants. What were the bottom-line findings? The authors explained,

“The most robust evidence found suggests charities could increase donations by

- (1) emphasizing individual beneficiaries,
- (2) increasing the visibility of donations,

- (3) describing the impact of the donation, and
- (4) enacting or promoting tax-deductibility of the charity.”³⁰

The first three results were all about vision.

- (1) Individual beneficiaries worked better. Why? Because they’re easier to picture. We can visualize a person. We can’t see a statistic in the same way.
- (2) Increasing the visibility of donations by others worked, too.
- (3) Describing the impact also worked. This makes the impact more visualizable.

So, what do we know from modern science? What do we know from 1,339 studies? We know that effective fundraising is all about vision. It’s about the visibility of the gift. It’s about the visibility of the impact. It’s about visibly good works. In ancient terms, it’s about *kalois* works.

The beautiful works creation experience

In the language of the passage, the donor not only buys a beautiful work. He brings it into being. He creates it.³¹ This experience of creation makes the giving attractive. One commentary describes the 1 Timothy 6:17-19 process this way,

“And as those with money discover the joy of enabling new things to come into being, so they will become, deep down, ‘generous and eager to share.’”³²

This is a feeling of creation. This feeling of creation makes the gift attractive. Without it, the gift isn’t as compelling.

A common donor question is

“I made a gift. What changed?”

Or,

“I made a gift. What happened as a result?”

Suppose the donor receives no report of the impact from his particular gift. He receives no confirmation that he successfully brought beauty into the world. In that case, the gift won't really add to his collection of beautiful, visible, good works. It doesn't help him grow rich in these beautiful works. He can still give, but it won't match Paul's instructions.

What's the point?

What opportunity are we offering to rich Christians? Are we offering the opportunity for them to do intrinsically good work? Are we offering the opportunity for them to become rich in visibly good works?

If not, then they shouldn't share their wealth with our organizations. They're not supposed to. They're not instructed to simply give their wealth away. They're instructed first to do intrinsically good work. They're instructed next to become rich in visibly-beautiful good works.

Offering this donor experience takes more effort. It's easier not to link outcomes with specific gifts. It's easier not to allow restricted gifts. But this misses the point. The point is not administrative ease. The point is joyful donors.

For a typical administrator, it's easy to miss the point. Their reaction might be something like,

“Oh, that's a hassle. What an accounting pain! No, let's skip all that. We should allow unrestricted gifts only.”

What causes this response? What's the motivation? Is it because this makes giving more enjoyable? No. Is it because it

makes giving more fun? No. Is it because it maximizes donor joy? No.

The point of that approach is administrative ease. If that's the goal, then we wouldn't do any of this. We wouldn't worry about reporting a gift's impact. We wouldn't allow any gift instructions. But if the point is donor joy, then we should do it. We should make our donors feel rich in visibly good works.

It's not easy. It requires work. It requires creativity. It may even require a more modest ego. That's often how ministry is – even a ministry to the rich.

Let me encourage you to try it. Test it out. Seek first to deliver this donor experience to rich Christians. Give them a chance to feel rich in visibly good works. You'll be amazed at how all the things of external fundraising success will be added to you!

¹ [Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.] See, e.g., Luke 21:5, “And while some were talking about the temple, that it was decorated with beautiful [*kalois*] stones and vowed gifts,”

² Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.

³ Campbell, A. (1826). *The living oracles New Testament*. 1 Timothy 6:18.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_dealer

⁵ Birkholz, J. & Lampi, A. (2023). *Benefactors: Why some fundraising professionals always succeed*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 61.

⁶ Birkholz, J. (2019, June). *Principal gifts*. [White paper]. BWF. <https://www.bwf.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Principal-Gifts-by-Birkholz.pdf>

⁷ For example, the Benois Madonna was painted by da Vinci. Yet, it is called the Benois Madonna because the Benois family owned it.

⁸ Berenson, B. (1954/1965). *Aesthetics and history*. Doubleday.

⁹ For example, Benozzo Gozzoli famously incorporates members of the Medici family into his painting of the Journey of the Magi. More subtly, in Da Vinci’s Madonna of the Carnation, “[The newborn Jesus] sits on a cushion adorned with crystal balls, a symbol used by the Medici family and an indication that they may have commissioned the work.” [Isaacson, W. (2018). *Leonardo da Vinci*. Simon & Schuster. p. 62.]

¹⁰ Getty, J. P. (1986). *How to be rich*. Penguin.

¹¹ Birkholz, J. & Lampi, A. (2023). *Benefactors: Why some fundraising professionals always succeed*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 52.

¹² Khodakarami, F., Petersen, J. A., & Venkatesan, R. (2015). Developing donor relationships: The role of the breadth of giving. *Journal of Marketing*, 79(4), 77-93.

¹³ “Using donation data spanning 20 years from a major US public university, the authors find that improvements in donation variety increase the likelihood that the donor will make a subsequent donation, increase the donation amount, and reduce the sensitivity of donations to negative macroeconomic shocks.” [Khodakarami, F., Petersen, J. A., & Venkatesan, R. (2015). Developing donor relationships: The role of the breadth of giving. *Journal of Marketing*, 79(4), 77-93. p. 77.]

¹⁴ Fine, J. (2018). *Beauty on display: Plato and the concept of the Kalon* (Doctoral dissertation). Columbia University. p. 1.

¹⁵ “The distinction between *agathos*, practically good, morally good ..., and *kalos*, aesthetically good, beautiful, good to men’s eyes ... is still present in Hellenistic Greek, though the contrast had been blurred.” [Lock, W. (1924). *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: I & II Timothy and Titus*. Charles Scribner’s Sons. p. 22.];

Professor Frederick William Danker describes *kalos* as “meeting high standards or expectations of appearance, kind, or quality.” [Danker, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*. 3rd Edition. The University of Chicago Press. p. 504.]

¹⁶ Stock, E. (1983). *Practical truths from the Pastoral Epistles*. Kregel Publications. p. 301.

¹⁷ Alford makes the distinction between the two types of good in an interesting way. He writes, “*agathos* is good towards another, *kalos* good in itself, noble, honourable.” [Alford, H. (1877). *The Greek Testament: The epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, to Timotheus, Titus, and Philemon* (Vol. 3). Lee & Shepard. p. 364.] This distinction also separates different kinds of gifts. A gift can be to a specific person. It helps that one person. But often, very large gifts are motivated by the desire to create a beautiful, noble work that benefits many people. The motivation comes not simply from the desire to benefit specific persons but from the desire to bring a noble, honorable, beautiful good work into existence. This motivation is similar to the artist’s motivation to bring something noble, honorable, and beautiful into existence rather than to address the immediate need of a single person.

Collins makes a similar distinction of *agathoergein* as being focused on a specific person, writing, “It is to be used for doing good (*agatho-ergein*; see Acts 14:17). The term is essentially synonymous with *agatho-poiein*, also ‘to do good,’ which in the Greek Bible and the New Testament means to do a good deed for another person. It appears in Luke’s Sermon on the Plain in reference to the material support of others (Luke 6:33, 35).” Collins, R. F. (2002). *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A commentary*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 171.

¹⁸ Kahneman, D., & Ritov, I. (1994). Determinants of stated willingness to pay for public goods: A study in the headline method. *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, 9, 5-38.

¹⁹ Bohnet, I., & Frey, B. S. (1999). The sound of silence in prisoner’s dilemma and dictator games. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 38(1), 43-57.

²⁰ Kogut, T., & Ritov, I. (2005). The singularity effect of identified victims in separate and joint evaluations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97(2), 106-116.

²¹ Dickert, S., Kleber, J., Västfjäll, D., & Slovic, P. (2016). Mental imagery, impact, and affect: A mediation model for charitable giving. *PLoS One*, 11(2), e0148274.

²² The researchers used the word “identifiability.” This referenced when participants received identifying character details, i.e., the child’s name and picture. I omit this phrasing to avoid confusion with the concepts of identifying, identification, and identity used in a different application (i.e., connection with the self) in this text.

²³ Zwaan, R.A. (2004). The immersed experienter: Toward an embodied theory of language comprehension. In B. H. Ross (Ed.), *The psychology of learning and motivation*, (Vol. 44, pp. 35-62). Elsevier.

²⁴ Hauge, M. (2018). *What does your hero want?* [Website]. <https://www.storymastery.com/character-development/what-does-your-hero-want-outer-motivation/>

²⁵ Study 1 in Dickert, S., Kleber, J., Västfjäll, D., & Slovic, P. (2016). Mental imagery, impact, and affect: A mediation model for charitable giving. *PLoS One*, 11(2), e0148274.

²⁶ Lee, S., & Feeley, T. H. (2016). The identifiable victim effect: A meta-analytic review. *Social Influence*, 11(3), 199-215.

²⁷ Dickert, S., Västfjäll, D., Kleber, J., & Slovic, P. (2012). Valuations of human lives: normative expectations and psychological mechanisms of (ir)rationality. *Synthese*,

189(1), 95-105. p. 101.

²⁸ Smith, C., Emerson, M. O., & Snell, P. (2008). *Passing the plate: Why American Christians don't give away more money*. Oxford University Press. p. 139.

²⁹ James, R. N., III (2018). Describing complex charitable giving instruments: Experimental tests of technical finance terms and tax benefits. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*. 28(4), 437-452; James, R. N., III (2018). Creating understanding and interest in charitable financial planning and estate planning: An experimental test of introductory phrases. *Journal of Personal Finance*. 17(2), 9-22; James, R. N., III (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27(2), 998-1011.

³⁰ Saeri, A. K., Slattery, P., Lee, J., Houlden, T., Farr, N., Gelber, R. L., Stone, J., Huuskens, L., Timmons, S., Windle, K. Spajic, L., Freeman, L., Moss, D., Behar, J., Schubert, S., Grundy, E. A. C. & Zorker, M. (2023). What works to increase charitable donations? A meta-review with meta-meta-analysis. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 34(3), 626-642. p. 626.

³¹ The *Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* was issued by over 100 theologians and economists in 1990. It notes, "Indeed, we are explicitly told that God 'richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy' (1 Timothy 6:17). Production is not only necessary to sustain life and make it enjoyable; it also provides an opportunity for human beings to express their creativity in the service of others." (Emphasis added.)

³² Wright, T. (2004). *Paul for Everyone: The Pastoral Letters. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus*. Westminster John Knox Press. p. 78.

Chapter 11

Message 9: You're being an admirable person!

- *Biblical fundraising is about the donor's admirable identity.*
- *Ordinary fundraising is about the organization's admirable identity.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, **to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share**, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

ADMIRABLE IDENTITY GIVING IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The donor's admirable identity story

The donor enjoys God's rich supply first by using it "to do good." This describes what a person does. The next phrases are different. They move from doing to being. "To do good" becomes "to be rich in good works." Doing good is an action. Being rich in good works is a status. It's an ongoing characteristic of the person.

Their generosity displays their internal identity. They become "rich in good [*kalois*] works." This word *kalois* means "beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so."¹ (Emphasis added.)

Notice, these are not just beautiful, visible good works. They're also expressions of internal identity.

The next phrase is “to be generous and ready to share.” In English, this repeats the same “to be” phrase. But in Greek it's different. This description modifies the donor's “I am” verb [*einaí*]. It defines the donor's core identity.

Their “I am” verb is modified first by the adjective “generous [*eu-meta-dotous*].” They don't just give, *dotous*. They give “with” or “among” others, *meta-dotous*. Their core identity is that of a good, *eu-*, sharer, *eu-metadotous*.

Next, their “I am” verb is modified by the adjective “ready to share [*koinōnikous*].” They are a sharer with the *koinōnia*, the fellowship community. Their core identity is that of a fellowship-community sharer, *koinōnikous*.

Notice how this fundraising message is intensely focused on the donor's identity. It begins with their values. The donors are in the ongoing process of being not high-minded. They're not above caring. It continues with their life history. They have already, in the past, done something. They've placed their hope not in the hiddenness of wealth but in God.

This story of their giving is the story of their identity. It's the story of their values, their people, and their life history. It's the story of their aspirational, inspirational, real identity. It's the story of their best self.

Giving comes from visualizing admirable identity

This passage links donor's giving to their ideal autobiography. Their giving links to their people. It links to their values. It links their life history. Their giving expresses and confirms their admirable identity.

This same idea works in modern research. When giving matches the donors' ideal vision of themselves, it's compelling. Researchers explain that giving becomes attractive when it reduces

“the gap between actual moral identity (i.e., how much one actually assigns to oneself the moral traits or the distinctive mental image of what a moral person is likely to think, feel, and do) and ideal moral identity (i.e., how much one would like to assign to oneself the moral traits or the distinctive mental image of what a moral person is likely to think, feel, and do).”²

In research, giving comes from a vision of oneself. It comes from an “ideal moral identity.” Paul lays out this ideal moral identity. He creates a distinctive mental image of an admirable identity. He makes it available to donors.

Wealth sharing comes from visualizing admirable identity

Research also shows the power of visualizing self-identity in estate giving. Estate giving is not giving from disposable income. It is wealth sharing. This wealth sharing comes from connections with one's people, values, and life story. In other words, it comes from one's identity.

We can see this in experiments. What's the most common motivation to include a charity in a will? It's the connection between the cause and the person's life story.³ What reminders increase interest in estate giving? Reminding people of their life story connections to a cause does.⁴ Reminding them of family members' connections to a cause does, too.⁵

Estate giving comes from a vision of one's self. This isn't just theoretical. It's physiological. Estate giving comes from

literal, neurological, internal visualization of one's self.

We can see this happen in the brain scanner. What predicts the choice to include a charity in an estate plan? The answer is activation in “visualized autobiography” brain areas (the precuneus and lingual gyrus).⁶

The precuneus activates when we take an external view of ourselves. It activates when we consider,

“How do I appear from an outside perspective?”

The lingual gyrus activates when we internally visualize. (For example, damage to this area can eliminate the ability to dream.)⁷ Both areas activate simultaneously when we engage in visualized life review.⁸ They reflect “visualized autobiography.”

Will a person decide to include a particular charity in their estate plan? Neurologically, it depends on internal self-visualization. This isn't just theory. We can physically observe it in the brain scanner. This wealth sharing comes from a vision of oneself.

In practical terms, this wealth-sharing gift must connect with the donor's autobiography. It must connect with their people, values, or life story. If it triggers this kind of visualized autobiography, it's compelling. Otherwise, it isn't.

An inspiring visible identity: Named, public gifts that motivate others

In 1 Timothy 6:18, the donors are not just rich. Through their giving, they are rich in beautiful, visible, inspirational good [*kalois*] works. Jesus commanded that such good works be visible to everyone.⁹

Making this giving visible multiplies it. Publicizing these gifts provides examples to others. It inspires others to act in this same way.

In his appeal letter, Paul publicly bragged about donors' giving. He bragged about donors to motivate the Macedonians to give. He writes,

“I have been boasting to the churches in Macedonia that you in Greece were ready to send an offering a year ago. In fact, it was your enthusiasm that stirred up many of the Macedonian believers to begin giving.” (2 Corinthians 9:2b NLT).

[Other translations use “I habitually boast”¹⁰ or “I brag about you”.¹¹]

He also bragged about donors to motivate the Corinthians to give. He writes,

“In order that our boasting about you may not prove empty ... otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to mention you—would be put to shame.” (2 Corinthians 9:3b-4b).

[Another translation uses “This will prove we were not wrong to brag about you”.¹²]

He also bragged to motivate the Corinthians to give publicly. He wanted everyone to see their example. He writes,

“Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.” (2 Corinthians 8:24).

[Other translations use “in full view of the churches,”¹³ “in the sight of the churches,”¹⁴ or “in the face of the churches”.¹⁵]

Must we be in the business of bragging about donors? Paul was. Should we constantly boast about their giving? Paul did. Should we tell donors to give publicly? Paul did this, too.

Scripture publicizes giving to ministry. It calls out by name those who contributed. We know the names of individual donors. We know donors like Susanna, Joanna, Mary Magdalene, and Phoebe.¹⁶ Luke doesn't just list the donors. He even includes brief bios about each. So does Paul.

We know about the donors. Often, we know about their specific gifts, too. We know that Barnabas made a real estate gift.¹⁷ We know that Mary of Bethany's asset gift was worth a year's wages.¹⁸ We know that the Macedonians gave even beyond their ability.¹⁹

Scripture gives public honor to ministry donors. Their inspirational, admirable identity leads to emulation. It inspires sharing throughout the fellowship community. Dr. Bobby Pell explains of modern "generosity heroes" in the church,

"Pastors having models of generosity to utilize, benefits both the model and those encouraged to emulate the model ... Pastors need models of generosity to reveal charitable patterns and encourage those considering giving but have not yet acted."²⁰

Dr. MacMillan Kiiru explains of 1 Timothy 6:18,

"Leaders should model good deeds and generosity for others to follow."²¹

Modeling generosity openly and publicly reinforces pro-social community norms. It can inspire others. It can affect others' giving.

Big gifts are named, public gifts that motivate others

That's what scripture says. What about real-world fundraising? Does such public leadership motivate big gifts? Yes.

One study explored the largest gifts made to all kinds of colleges. It looked at the largest gifts to community colleges, small private colleges, and large research universities. These largest gifts had some things in common. Most of these donors explicitly tried to model generosity for others to follow. The report explained,

“The possibility of galvanizing additional giving was cited as a goal of 56% of gifts, suggesting that institutions and donors see principal or transformational gifts as an exemplary act with the potential to stimulate giving by others.”²²

Most donors intended their massive gifts to inspire others to give. They intended to make inspirational gifts.

Were these gifts also public expressions of the donor's identity? Yes. The study explained,

“More than 70% of gifts conferred naming rights on the donor.”²³

Massive gifts are intended to inspire others to give. They're also expressions of the donor's identity.

Research and theory show how giving can come from a vision of oneself. In the largest gifts, this identity expression isn't subtle. The name of the donor or the donor's family goes on the building, scholarship, or endowment. In the same way, the largest estate gifts typically go to private family foundations. These, too, are named for the donor or the donor's family.

Donor naming rights do work. However, naming rights might not be culturally acceptable in your organization. They often conflict with modern church culture. For example, we would never put someone's name on the building where the church meets just because they paid for the building. That would be offensive.

Yet even this has happened before. There was a time when churches were called by the name of the rich person who had paid for the large buildings where the churches gathered. Who would do such a thing? Paul would. He writes,

“Please give my greetings ... to Nympha and the church that meets in her house.” (Colossians 4:15 NLT).

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila ... Greet also the church that meets at their house.” (Romans 16:3, 5 NLT).

“to our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the church that meets in your house.” (Philemon 1:2b NLT).

The churches were identified by the name of the rich person who had paid for the large building where the churches met. That wasn't necessary. Paul could have just called it the church where that person attended. He could have called it by the name of the street where the structure was located.

But Paul didn't do that. He called the church by the name of the rich person (or rich couple) who owned the large building and donated its use. The building where the church met was a named building. It was named for the donor.

The identity journey: It's a story

Paul's fundraising instructions are not just a list. They're a story. They're the donor's story.

A story has universal elements. It will be about someone. It will start with the setting and the main character's backstory. This backstory will compel the main character to accept a challenge. This is the call to adventure.

Ultimately, this challenge will result in a victory. After the victory, the story will end with a resolution. The resolution demonstrates how the main character's identity has changed. Their internal and/or external identity has grown.

In a good story, the character must arc. The main character grows. He or she is not the same person at beginning and the end. At its core, a story is a journey. It's a journey of identity growth.

Paul tells a story about the donor. It has all the story elements. And it has a powerful ending. The donor's giving will have an impact. He will accomplish something. He will do intrinsically good works. He will do visibly good works. He will win tangible victories.

After the donor's victory is the resolution. The resolution confirms the donor's identity transformation. The donor doesn't just do something. Through his victories, he becomes something. He becomes rich in good works. He becomes a good sharer. He becomes a deeply connected, fellowship-community sharer. The donor's internal and/or external identity is transformed. The donor becomes an admirable person.

If any story element is missing, giving becomes less compelling. A story becomes less compelling for the donor when

- The story is not about the donor.
- The story is not about the donor's actions.

- The donor's actions don't connect to the donor's backstory.
- The donor receives no challenging call to adventure.
- The donor makes no visualizable impact and wins no visualizable victory.
- The donor's public or private identity is not changed or enhanced.
- No resolution publicly or privately confirms the donor's enhanced identity.

A compelling story must trigger a clear image. It must have a plot. This means something must change. Ultimately, the character must arc. The journey should result in identity growth.

This is what works in a story. It's also what works in fundraising. So, if it works, why is it so rare? It's rare, because there are barriers that prevent this type of giving. There are barriers that prevent this type of fundraising.

PART II

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS TO ADMIRABLE IDENTITY GIVING

(Message 9: You're being an admirable person!)

Barriers to admirable identity giving: Donors

Increasing the visibility of a giver, a gift, and its impact increases giving. It does so for the donor. It does so for others who see the giving. Visibility is powerful. So, why is it so often missing?

It's often missing because there are barriers. These resist visibility. These barriers can come from the organization. They can even come from donors.

People give more when gifts are visible. But that doesn't mean people want visibility. In experiments, people will actually pay money for gifts not to be visible.²⁴ And then they'll give less than they would have if others could have seen their giving.

Keeping sharing hidden is attractive. But this hiddenness reduces giving. Keeping wealth hidden is also attractive. But this, too, reduces giving.

Hidden wealth is attractive. This explains a common misunderstanding of the wealthy. One in-depth study of the very wealthy explained it this way:

“People tend to think of wealthy individuals as ostentatious spendthrifts who enjoy the visibility and status their wealth affords. In fact, say the authors,

wealthy individuals usually identify as middle class and try to keep their wealth out of sight.”²⁵

It explained,

“Foremost among their values is the concept of ‘stealth wealth’—they avoid showing off their wealth and maintain their native middle-class values.”²⁶

People often misunderstand this attraction to hidden wealth. Another study showed this in a different way. Those who market to wealthy people were asked if the wealthy,

“Want people to know they are wealthy.”

Most marketers said yes.

Those who were actually wealthy were asked the same question. Only 1 in 10 said yes.²⁷ About 90% of wealthy people did not want others to know they were wealthy.

In 1 Timothy 6:17-18, there is a tempting alternative to enjoying wealth by using it to do good. It is to place one’s hope in the hiddenness [*adēlotētī*] of wealth.

Making a major gift can be scary. It can be scary because it can reveal the donor as wealthy. This fear of discovery can be a major barrier to making large donations. As one donor shared,

“Please don’t let anyone know I’m making this gift. If others find out I’m wealthy, I’ll be constantly hounded by requests.”

People give more when gifts are visible. But that doesn’t mean they want visibility. How can we overcome this barrier?

We can emphasize the power of visible gifts to influence others. When a donor allows a charity to share their story, it's like making a second gift to the charity. It inspires others.

We can emphasize what others are doing. We all, together, are sharing, together, whatever God has richly blessed us with. (1 Timothy 6:17-19). The wealthy donor is no different from the one who shares their gifts of serving, teaching, preaching, encouraging, leading, or caregiving. (Romans 12:6-8).

We can make visibility automatic. If the gift is not almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*], which must be hidden, then we can make publicity normal. Opting out may be an option, but it should at least require some extra effort.

Or, if we want to get extreme, we would follow Paul's example. We would widely publicize even the mere intention to give. We would boast about it to inspire others to give. Then we would return to those who shared their plans and say,

“I know how eager you are to give. And I have proudly told the Lord's followers in Macedonia that you people in Achaia have been ready for a whole year. Now your desire to give has made them want to give. This is why I am sending Titus and the two others to you. I want you to be ready, just as I promised. This will prove we were not wrong to brag about you. Some followers from Macedonia may come with me, and I want them to find that you have the money ready. If you don't, I would be embarrassed for trusting you to do this. But you would be embarrassed even more.” (2 Corinthians 9:2-4, CEV).

Of course, that's extreme fundraising behavior. It's probably not acceptable at your organization. It might even get you fired. It's definitely not normal. But it is Biblical!

Barriers to admirable identity giving: Complexity

Gifts do have an impact. We know that. If giving stops, the ministry stops. (Or at least much of it stops.) But making the impact of a specific gift visualizable takes effort.

Doing this is easier for big gifts. It's easier when we're focused on wealth sharing by the rich. But it still takes work. Making the donor feel that they have done visibly good work takes effort. It takes creativity. But it is possible.

We can offer donors the chance to be rich in visibly good works. We can help them envision the impact of their gift. We can help them see it.

We can turn a budget into a menu. We can allow large gifts to cover specific, personally meaningful items. We can price out the total cost for a specific outreach. We can price it for a week, a month, or a year. We can price an endowment to cover it permanently.

This allows donors to, literally, buy work – to use the terms from scripture. If you tell me I paid for a month of ministry X, then I own that work. It's mine. I paid for it. It's my good work. If I've done this every year for the last 10 years, what does that feel like? It feels like my accumulation of beautiful works. It's my collection of noble, inspirational, good works.

We can describe a gift's impact in a way that evokes a clear image. Doing this takes effort. This effort can be a barrier. Another barrier is complexity. Leaders see organizational operations in all their complexity. They often want to force this complexity into donor messages. But complexity won't evoke a clear image. Complexity kills story. It kills fundraising.

Effective fundraisers reframe this complexity into a visualizable story. They change it into a clear image. One secular study identified the key factors in successful major gift asks. The researchers explained,

“they rely on the fundraisers’ skills in reframing complex issues and finding alignment between the recipient organization’s needs and the philanthropic aspirations of the donor.”²⁸

Successful major gift fundraisers excel at “reframing complex issues.” They build a clear and simple giving opportunity. They help to advance the “philanthropic aspirations of the donor.”

We, too, can “reframe complex issues.” We can make them part of a personally meaningful giving opportunity for the donor. It will be part of a story about the donor. It will be a story about the donor’s admirable values (or “philanthropic aspirations”). It will be a story about the donor’s admirable impact. It will be a story about the donor’s admirable identity. It will be a story that matches the authorized message of 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

Barriers to admirable identity giving: Administrator ego

In Paul’s fundraising instructions, the donor is the one who does intrinsically good work. The donor is the one who becomes rich in visibly good works. It’s a story about the donor’s identity. This is an effective story for major gifts. It’s effective, but it’s rare.

The more typical fundraising story is about the charity’s identity. The charity administrators are the heroes. They are the ones who do intrinsically good work. They are the ones who become rich in visibly good works.

In that story, giving is the well-earned response to the administrators' heroic good works. Donors honor the organization's heroic identity through their giving.

This story leads to administrator-ego-driven fundraising. This fundraising isn't concerned about delivering a donor experience. The donor is supposed to deliver value to the charity, not the other way around. Donors are supposed to be motivated by the administrators' heroic good works.

This story also suggests how we can raise more money. We just need to tell this administrator hero story to more people. This, of course, will motivate the audience. They'll be compelled to honor the heroic administrators by laying money at their feet.

This story is attractive, but only to charity administrators. For donors, it's not that compelling. It might work for a token gift. It might trigger a "pat on the head" gift. It might get an "isn't that nice for you people" gift. But it won't work for the large gift. It won't work for the major life investment gift. It won't work for the wealth-sharing gift.

Telling the donor impact story is different. Telling the donor identity story is different. It requires lowering the charity administrators' ego. It also requires effort. Delivering the donor identity experience takes hard work.

It's supposed to be fun: A ministry responsibility

Consider this music minister. Every week he sluggishly leads singing at his church. His expression never changes. He always uses the same songs. He includes four stanzas of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." And then, just to be authentic, he does it again – in the original German from 1529. And people don't like it. They don't enjoy it. They aren't inspired by it.

When asked about this result, the minister responds,
“The problem is that our church members need to be better people. If we get them to be better Christians, then they would enjoy it more. If they just became more dedicated, they would like it more.”

Is this the right response for an effective ministry? Of course not. That’s not how music ministry works.

Or suppose instead of delivering inspiring sermons, a preacher just read slow, dry, recycled text in a monotone voice. And people don’t enjoy it. Should he respond in that same way? Of course not. That’s not how preaching ministry works. That’s not how any ministry works.

Of course, we already know this. We already do this. We work hard to make the experiences attractive. We work hard to make them uplifting, inspiring, and motivational. We work hard to make them enjoyable. We do this in every area of ministry – except one. Giving.

Giving is supposed to be joyful. When people aren’t enjoying their giving, what’s the response? Do we go to work to make the experience more attractive? Do we do everything we can to make it more uplifting, inspiring, and motivational? We should. Instead, the response is often to blame the donors. It’s a response that says,

“The problem is that our church members need to be better people. If we get them to be better Christians, then they would enjoy it more. If they just became more dedicated, they would like it more.”

Of course, this response is much easier than actually doing any work. It’s easier than making any changes. It’s lazy.

We can look at these issues as purely donor responsibilities. If this donor experience isn't happening, that's not our problem. It's the donors' problem. If the donors were better people, that would fix the problem. But that's not how this ministry works. That's not how any ministry works.

Ministry starts where people are

Giving starts with the donor's heart. It's supposed to accurately reflect the heart. It's supposed to make the donor rich in good [*kalois*] works. This good [*kalois*] is,

“beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.”²⁹ (Emphasis added.)

This does not mean we need to start with perfect people. Donors don't need be perfect before they give. Instead, we start where they are. We start where they are right now, today. That's how ministry works.

We start with the good, noble, honorable aspects of their character. We can ask questions that help them to uncover these. We can make statements that remind them of these.

Then, we can provide giving opportunities that match these specific character attributes. We can create opportunities for the donor to become rich in good [*kalois*] works. We can create opportunities that grow the admirable characteristics of the donor's identity. We can help to grow the donor's admirable identity.

Growing the donor's admirable identity: The gardening guidelines

We want the donors to become rich in *kalois* works. We

want them to become rich in works that are

“beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character;”³⁰

How do we do this? We can think of this like gardening. We want to grow the donor’s admirable identity. We start by finding the sprouts. We start by finding those parts of the donor’s inward character that are good, noble and honorable.

We can ask questions that help them to uncover these. For example, we might ask things like:

“What inspires you to give?”³¹

“How does your giving reflect your values?”³²

“Can you tell me a bit more about who taught you to be generous or where your generous spirit comes from?”³³

“What’s motivated you to be such a consistent supporter [of this charity]?”³⁴

“Why does this cause matter to you?”³⁵

If we already know these things, we can reinforce them. We can highlight them. We can water these sprouts. We can reinforce them. We can make statements affirming their specific good, noble, or honorable characteristics.

We might reference their values. We could mention their already-in-progress ongoing characteristic (Greek present tense) of being not high-minded. They are not above or separated from the fellowship community.

We might reference their life story. We could point out that they have already-in-the-past-with-continuing-effects-on-the-present (Greek perfect tense) not set their hope on the uncertainty of riches. Instead, they have set their hope on God. We can reinforce these parts of their past and current life story.

We might reference their people. We could point out others like them who do the same thing. We each receive from God. We each enjoy it by using to do good.

Whatever their positive character feature is, we start with that. We point it out to them. Maybe, like Timothy, they are continuing a family tradition of “sincere faith.” (2 Timothy 1:5). Maybe, like the Athenians, they are “very religious.” (Acts 17:22). Maybe, like Agrippa, they are “expert in all customs and questions” of the Old Testament law. (Acts 26:2-3). Maybe, like Felix, they have the wisdom of many years of experience. (Acts 24:10).

The point of all of this is to connect their specific good, noble, or honorable characteristic to an action. In fundraising, we connect it to specific good work. That’s how we grow the admirable character feature.

In gardening terms, this good work will be a trellis for the character vine. We find a trellis – a potential good work – that fits right next to the admirable sprout. A trellis won’t work unless you put it right next to the sprout. We would never put a trellis on the other side of the garden and hope the vine will stretch far enough to reach!

How do we find or construct this nearby matching good work? We can ask. We might ask

“If you could do anything for [this charity], if the sky was the limit, what would that look like to you?”³⁶

“If money were no object, what would we be doing that we’re not now doing?”³⁷

“If money were no object, what kind of an impact would you like your giving to have?”

“What would be your dream gift?”³⁸

“How would you like to make a difference in this community? In this world?”³⁹

“What change do you want to see because of your giving?”⁴⁰

“What do you want to achieve with your charitable donations?”⁴¹

We don't sell just any beautiful good works. Instead, we come alongside the donor. We help to find or construct giving opportunities that are not only beautiful, but also,

“beautiful, as an outward sign of their inward good, noble, honorable character.”

We help them to become rich in *kalois* works.

And then, we lock it in. We get them fully committed. How? We expose it to the light. We make sure their works are

“good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.”

When we “boast about” them and their philanthropy, it has an effect on others. (2 Corinthians 9:2). Their “zeal” for giving stirs up others to behave in the same way. (2 Corinthians 9:2).

This publicity has another effect. It locks them into the action. Our public boasting about them commits them to the honorable character trait. It commits them to follow through with it. (2 Corinthians 9:3). Otherwise they could be publicly embarrassed. (2 Corinthians 9:4).

And what is the result of this philanthropic gardening process? What fruit does it bear? It bears fruit that increases to the donor's credit.

“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit [*karpon*] that increases to your credit.” (Philippians 4:17, ESV).

This fruit is *karpon*. A lexicon further describes this word as,

“Of Christian charity, i.e., benefit, to accomplish much ... used of men’s deeds as exponents of their hearts ... **to exhibit** deeds agreeing with a change of heart.”⁴²
(Emphasis added.)

The fruit reflects the donor’s heart. The donors become rich in works that are

“beautiful, as an outward sign of the inward good, noble, honorable character; good, worthy, honorable, noble, and seen to be so.”⁴³

That’s a beautiful harvest! That’s a beautiful garden!
That’s enjoyable giving!

The joy of admirable identity giving

Big giving is often visible, identity-connected giving. We can get to big giving by helping donors to connect a gift with their identity – their life story and values. We can help them to define their most personally meaningful gift.

This process can lead to large gifts. In Bible terms, these are also generous gifts. Outside of 1 Timothy 6:18, the normal word translated as “generous” is *haplotēs*. This word requires that the gift accurately represents the donor’s heart. Getting to “generous” [*haplotēs*] gifts starts with the donor’s heart. It starts with who they are. It starts with who they truly want to be. It starts with the admirable features of their identity.

In fundraising, this works. This leads to major, life-investment gifts. But it’s important to remember the point. The point is not large gifts. The point is joyful gifts. Gifts that effectively express the donor’s admirable identity characteristics are joyful gifts. And that’s the point. The point is joyful giving. The point is enjoyment.

- ¹ Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.
- ² [Shang, J., Reed, A., Sargeant, A., & Carpenter, K. (2020). Marketplace donations: The role of moral identity discrepancy and gender. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 57(2), 375-393. p. 376. (Emphasis added.)] This study found relationship values reminders to be more impactful for women but also noted the future research question, “If women’s relationship concerns enabled us to shrink their moral identity discrepancy through relationship-building activities, is it possible that we could shrink men’s moral identity discrepancy through authority-building or fairness-restoration activities because of their need to be the agent to uphold moral values?” (p. 390).
- ³ Jones, M., & Routley, C. (2022). “When I go my family will see my life in programmes”: Legacy giving and identity at the Royal Opera House. *Journal of Philanthropy and Marketing*, 27(2), e1728; Routley, C. J. (2011). *Leaving a charitable legacy: Social influence, the self and symbolic immortality* (Doctoral dissertation). University of the West of England. p. 220.
- ⁴ James, R. N., III. (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27, 998-1011.
- ⁵ James III, R. N. (2015). The family tribute in charitable bequest giving: An experimental test of the effect of reminders on giving intentions. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 26(1), 73-89.
- ⁶ James III, R. N., & O’Boyle, M. W. (2014). Charitable estate planning as visualized autobiography: An fMRI study of its neural correlates. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 43(2), 355-373.
- ⁷ Bischof, M., & Basseti, C. L. (2004). Total dream loss: A distinct neuropsychological dysfunction after bilateral PCA stroke. *Annals of Neurology*, 56, 583-586.
- ⁸ See, e.g., “retrieving detailed vivid autobiographical experiences, as opposed to personal semantic information, is a crucial mediating feature that determines the involvement of hippocampus and two posterior neocortical regions, precuneus and lingual gyrus, in remote autobiographical memory.” [Gilboa, A., Winocur, G., Grady, C. L., Hevenor, S. J., & Moscovitch, M. (2004). Remembering our past: Functional neuroanatomy of recollection of recent and very remote personal events. *Cerebral Cortex*, 14, 1214-1225. p. 1221.]; Denkova found that three of the four most statistically significant regions associated with recalling autobiographical personal events were in the lingual gyrus and precuneus areas [Denkova, E. (2006). *The neural bases of autobiographical memory: How personal recollections interact with emotion and influence semantic memory* (Doctoral dissertation). University Louis Pasteur of Strasbourg.]; “Finally, the precuneus and the left temporal pole have also been observed to be activated in earlier perspective-taking studies (Ruby & Decety, 2001, 2003, 2004) and this has been related to imagery, autobiographical memory retrieval and semantic processing (Cabeza & Nyberg, 2000) ... activation of the visual cortex (in the lingual gyrus) might also be related to autobiographical memory retrieval and in particular to visual imagery components, which play a key role in autobiographical memory (Greenberg & Rubin, 2003)” [D’Argembeau, D., Ruby, P., Collette, F., Degueldre, C., Balteau, E., Luxen, A., & Salmon, E. (2007). Distinct regions of the medial prefrontal cortex are associated with self-referential processing and perspective taking. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 19, 935-944.]

⁹ Matthew 5:16; Notice the treatment of these good works gifts [*ergois kalois*] and also the fellowship-community gifts [*koinōnikous*] are very different from almsgiving gifts [*eleēmosynē*], which are to be secret and hidden.

¹⁰ Weymouth New Testament

¹¹ Holman Christian Standard Bible; GOD’S WORD® Translation

¹² Contemporary English Version

¹³ Berean Standard Bible

¹⁴ Amplified Version

¹⁵ English Revised Version; American Standard Version; Berean Literal Bible

¹⁶ Luke 8:1-3; Romans 16:1-2

¹⁷ Acts 4:36-37

¹⁸ Mark 14:5

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 8:3

²⁰ Pell Jr, B. R. (2023). *Involving high-income believers in church-wide stewardship for missional causes* (Doctoral dissertation). Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. p. 33.

²¹ Kiiru, M. (2004). *How to develop resources for Christian ministries*. Uzima Publishing House. p. 31.

²² Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A. & King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 7.

²³ Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A. & King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 24.

²⁴ Dana, J., Cain, D. M., & Dawes, R. M. (2006). What you don’t know won’t hurt me: Costly (but quiet) exit in dictator games. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 100(2), 193-201.

²⁵ Choy, E. (2021). *Transforming partnerships with major donors*. Leadership story lab.

²⁶ Choy, E. (2021). *Transforming partnerships with major donors*. Leadership story lab.

²⁷ More precisely, 11% [Taylor, J., & Harrison, D. (2008). *The new elite: Inside the minds of the truly wealthy*. AMACOM Div American Mgmt Assn. p. 19.]

²⁸ Breeze, B., & Jollymore, G. (2017). Understanding solicitation: Beyond the binary variable of being asked or not being asked. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 22(4), e1607. p. 1.

²⁹ Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. *Kalos*. p. 123.

³⁰ Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.

³¹ Modified from the original, “What motivates/inspires you to make a charitable gift?” [Cadogan, E. & Skinner, K. (2016, October). *Transformational blended gifts: Shifting the organizational culture*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, Dallas, TX, p. 9.]

- ³² Ahern, T., & Joyaux, S. P. (2011). *Keep your donors: The guide to better communications & stronger relationships*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 147.
- ³³ Green, F., Wagg, H. & Field, C. (2019). *You can't take it with you: The art and science of legacy fundraising*. Independently published. p. 106.
- ³⁴ Comfort, J. & Lumpkin, S. (2017, October). *How to have the MOST productive conversations: From here to eternity...* [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, Baltimore, MD. p. 6.
- ³⁵ Ahern, T., & Joyaux, S. P. (2011). *Keep your donors: The guide to better communications & stronger relationships*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 261.
- ³⁶ O'Neil, K. (2020, May 6). Personal communication. Kim O'Neil Associate Vice President, Institutional Advancement, Texas Tech University.
- ³⁷ Davidson, P. J. (2012). *A planned giving plan of action: A three-year plan*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, New Orleans, LA. p. 1.
- ³⁸ Melvin, A. (2018, October). *The ties that bind: Effective cultivation techniques*. [Paper presentation]. Charitable Gift Planning Conference. Las Vegas, NV, p. 4.
- ³⁹ *Id. at 262.*
- ⁴⁰ Fridman, N. (2021, May 26). *Why now is the perfect time to have a conversation about values, giving and your family's legacy* [PowerPoint slides]. Life and Legacy Annual Gathering, online. p. 17.
- ⁴¹ Bristol, E. & Lysakowski, L. (2013). *The leaky bucket: What's wrong with your fundraising and how you can fix it*. CharityChannel Press. p. 186.
- ⁴² Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. Harper & Brothers. p. 326.
- ⁴³ Souter, A. (1917). *A pocket lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Oxford University Press. p. 123.

Chapter 12

Message 10: You're ready to joyfully share abundance!

- *Biblical fundraising's goal is ready, happy, abundance sharers.*
- *Ordinary fundraising's goal is just getting money.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, **to be generous and ready** to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

PART I

GETTING READY TO SHARE

Getting ready

Most translations of 1 Timothy 6:18b emphasize being prepared or ready to share. Some use "ready" in the first half of the phrase. For example,

- "ready to give, willing to share,"¹
- "ready to distribute, willing to share"²

Others do so in the second half. For example,

- "generous and ready to share"³
- "generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others"⁴

Some apply it to both halves as in, ⁵

- “ready to give and to share”⁶
- “ready to share well and generously”⁷

The sequence can vary, but the word is the same. The word is “ready.” (The few translations that don’t use “ready” usually substitute “willing.”)⁸

Why “ready” is different

It’s easy to think of giving as a quick, offhanded decision. We’re asked to give. We say yes or no. It’s that simple.

That concept fits with small gifts. Those are quick, reactive, pocket-change decisions.⁹ But this passage isn’t about those kinds of gifts. This is different. This is wealth sharing. These are big gifts. These are big decisions.

Paul’s message for the donor is not simply to give. Instead, it is to be ready to give or share. Preparation is the key. This preparation is what makes giving fun. It’s what makes giving free, easy, and open-handed.¹⁰ It’s also what makes giving big.

Paul’s fundraising focus on “ready”

What is fundraising? A naïve view is that we just ask people for money. They say yes or no. And then we’re done.

Notice how far this idea is from Paul’s approach. 2 Corinthians 8 & 9 is Paul’s fundraising appeal letter. It reveals a few of the steps in his fundraising process. These include:

1. Obtain an advance intention or pledge to give. (2 Corinthians 8:11; 9:2).

2. Request weekly saving at home to prepare in advance for making this gift large. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
3. Publicize the advance pledge to others to motivate others' giving. (2 Corinthians 9:2).
4. Tell the original pledgers about this publicity of their gift intentions. (2 Corinthians 9:2).
5. Tell them about the generous gifts from others that resulted from this publicity of their intentions. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:2).
6. Mention their upcoming public pledge fulfillment date. (2 Corinthians 8:6).
7. Mention their public leadership role as one of the initial pledgers. (2 Corinthians 8:10b).
8. Describe the reputational damage to them if they were not to give. (2 Corinthians 9:3-4).
9. Describe the personal benefits to them resulting from their upcoming gift. (2 Corinthians 8:10a, 13-14; 9:6, 8, 10-11, 13-14).
10. Share details about the diligent financial administration of the gift. (2 Corinthians 8:20-23).
11. Alert them of the upcoming arrival of those who will help "arrange in advance your previously promised generous gift." (2 Corinthians 9:5).

That's a lot of steps! But notice something important. The prospective donors still have not yet made a gift. They could still say no. Paul still has not yet reached that decision point in his fundraising process.¹¹ This isn't a quick process. It's not just a simple ask for money.

So, what is Paul doing? He's working to get the donors ready. And he's not just getting them ready to give. He's getting them ready to give freely, joyfully, and abundantly.

Paul's fundraising outcomes

Fundraising can be a lot of work. And what are the two possible outcomes of the fundraising work? Either they give, or they don't, right? Actually, that's not right. That's not how Paul sees it. He describes the two outcomes differently. He writes,

“But I have sent the brothers, in order that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, **you will be prepared**; otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and **find you unprepared**, we—not to mention you—would be put to shame” (2 Corinthians 9:4b).

[Other translations use “ready” and “not ready” instead of “prepared” and “unprepared.”]¹²

Here, Paul has already done a lot of fundraising work. And what will be the outcome of all his work? As he describes it, there are two possible outcomes:

1. The donors will be prepared (ready).

Or,

2. The donors will be unprepared (not ready).

The real-world fundraising focus on “ready”

Paul's approach shifts the usual mindset in fundraising. Typically, we ask, “Did the donor give?” If the answer is no, we see it as a failure. We tried, and we failed. It feels like a dead end. We can't just ask again; they've already said no. That “no” ends the story.

Now, let's change the question. Instead, we ask, "Was the donor ready to give?" If the answer is no, it's not the end. It's just the beginning. It opens up new questions. Why wasn't the donor ready? What was missing? How can we address those missing pieces? These questions lead to action.

So, what do these questions look like in real life? What can we say after a "no"? First, we confirm what's not missing. We can check the story elements from this passage. We might confirm their personal values, life history, or social connections. Jerold Panas suggests,

"You've been a supporter for so long and have done so much, I was certain you felt positive about our work and our vision. Do you still feel that same friendship and support?"¹³

Next, we can confirm that the promised "good works" are compelling. For example,

"I remember the last time we met, you said it was very important to you that ... [insert the "good work" the gift accomplishes]. Has that changed for you?"¹⁴

We can confirm that the gift would create the promised "good works." For example,

"Are you concerned that the organization wouldn't be effective at using this gift to make a difference in the lives of these people?"

Ultimately, this conversation will reveal the donor's objection. Along the way, however, we reconfirm the donor's story elements. This changes the objection. It becomes a barrier preventing the donor from accomplishing *his* goal. It's preventing him from creating *his* beautiful good works. It's keeping him from good works reflecting *his* inward character.

We can confirm this, too. For example,

- “It sounds like you would like to invest in our school, but right now you can’t see how you might do it. Am I right about that?”¹⁵
- Donor: “I need to talk with my accountant. He’s not going to like it.” You: “What is important here today is that you would like this gift to happen.¹⁶ If you want it to happen, we can work on the other issues together.”
- Donor: “I don’t think I can swing it.” You: “Maybe not, but I think you want to swing it. Am I right?”¹⁷

The barrier might be the price, timing, project, organization, or something else. For each barrier, we can discuss a solution. We can help the donor to become “ready” to share. For example,

- If the project is the problem: “You mentioned this project just isn’t for you. What area of work would you be interested in?”¹⁸
- If the price is the problem: “We’re not asking for a gift right now, just a pledge. As long as you can start your payments within the next three years, a pledge is just as good as a gift.”¹⁹
- If the leadership is the problem: “I understand how you feel. Others who have felt the same way have decided to put specific instructions with their gift. That way they know exactly what their money is accomplishing. Would a permanent endowment funding the homeless outreach be of more interest to you?”

Ultimately, we identify the missing piece. We find out why the donor isn’t ready. Then we work together to see if we can help them overcome that barrier. This isn’t an argument.

It's coming alongside the donor to help them. As one fundraiser explains,

“By turning the objection into an objective, you've put yourself on the same side of the table as the other person. Now you both are working together to figure out how to help the donor make the gift. You've taken a possibly challenging problem and made solving it a team effort.”²⁰

Coming alongside to instruct [*para-angelle*] doesn't stop because of a “no.” We can reconfirm the story elements that make the gift compelling for this donor. We can identify the barrier. We can propose solutions.

And if the donor still isn't ready – that's OK. Presenting a compelling gift opportunity is still an important step. If a donor feels that the gift would create a good work that reflects his heart, he's almost ready. Financial barriers might exist today, but they can change tomorrow. A “no” isn't the end.

This approach transforms fundraising. It's not about a quick “yes.” Instead, it's about getting donors prepared. It's about getting them ready.

Getting ready for eu-sharing

And what, exactly, are we getting them ready to do? To give? Not quite. Yes, a donor who doesn't give is a donor who was unprepared. But so is one who gives reluctantly. So is one who gives only sparingly. They gave, but they didn't give joyfully and generously.

The goal is not just to get the donor to give something. It's to get the donor to be something. The phrase “to be generous” is *einai eumetadotous*. *Einai* is the donor's “I am” verb. *Eumetadotous* describes their identity. The goal is to get

them to embrace their identity [*einai*] as a *eu*-sharer [*eu-metadotous*].

This *eu*- prefix describes the good sharer. It implies sharing that is free and easy. It is fun and enjoyable. It also means sharing richly from abundance. It's the identity of the one who shares the right way.

This is not just about getting the gift. It's about the donor's emotion, experience, and identity in making the gift. It's about helping the donor to be ready. It's about helping the donor to be ready to joyfully share wealth from abundance.

PART II

GETTING READY BY MOVING FROM WEALTH TO ABUNDANCE

(Message 10: You're ready to joyfully share abundance!)

Being a good (ready-joyful-abundance) sharer

Rich Christians are “to be generous and ready.” In Greek, they are to be *eumetadotous*. *Metadotous* means being a sharer. It's giving [*dotous*] “with or among” [*meta*] others. Being *eumetadotous* means being a *eu*-sharer. This *eu*- prefix means good in the sense of joyful, abundant, and rich. It also references being ready and willing. Thus, a *eu*-sharer is ready to joyfully share wealth from abundance.

These ideas are connected. We must first recognize our abundance. Otherwise we won't be ready to joyfully share wealth from abundance. If we don't recognize our abundance, our sharing will be sparse. It will be sharing from scarcity. It won't be as rich. It won't be as free and easy. It won't be as joyful.

Abundance wealth is “extra”

Wealth is an accumulation. The amount of accumulation is objective. It's just a list of assets. But the feeling of being rich – of having accumulated extra – is not objective. It's a subjective feeling. It's a feeling of abundance rather than scarcity.

What turns wealth into abundance? This happens when part of the wealth becomes “extra.” This subjective feeling is a key part of getting ready to share.

Suppose a donor accumulates some wealth. Will his wealth sharing be free, easy, and joyful? That depends. If he believes he'll need that money to survive, it won't be. Any sharing will be difficult or even painful.

If, instead, he believes those funds are extra, things change. Sharing can then be free, easy, and joyful. The key is giving from extra. It's giving from abundance.

Extra is more than enough

Having extra allows sharing from abundance. It makes giving free, easy, and joyful. So, how do we get to "extra"? We get to "extra" by having more than "enough."

In Greek, having enough is *autarkeia*. This word means self-sufficiency or independence. It also means contentment. It is,

“a sufficiency of the necessaries of life.”²¹

Anything beyond *autarkeia* is extra.

A few verses before our passage, Paul opens his discussion of wealth. He opens with *autarkeia*. He writes,

“But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment [*autarkeias*].” (1 Timothy 6:6).

He does this same thing in his fundraising appeal letter. He writes,

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency [*autarkeian*] in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

In his donation acknowledgment letter, he writes,

“Not that I speak from need, for I have learned to be content [*autarkēs*] in whatever circumstances I am.” (Philippians 4:11).

Paul uses this word only three times.²² In our passage, it sets the stage for a discussion of giving. In 2 Corinthians, it is part of a giving appeal. In Philippians, it is part of a gift acknowledgment.²³ Having enough – having contentment – is key to charitable giving.

Autarkeia means self-sufficiency, independence, and contentment. It means having “enough.” Helping a person to recognize that they have enough is important. It’s important for giving. It gets them ready to give in a free, easy, and enjoyable way. Giving is easy when it is giving from “extra.”

Recognizing that we have “enough” [*autarkeian*] leads to abundance. In the language of 2 Corinthians 9:8, *autarkeian* leads to “an abundance for every good deed.” This giving from abundance is free, easy, and enjoyable. Giving from abundance is *eu*-giving.

The economics of contentment

Having wealth doesn’t automatically lead to abundance. Having “extra” wealth does.²⁴ What makes wealth “extra”? When is wealth more than enough? The answer starts with this question:

“How much money do you need for contentment?”

Paul explains,

“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:8).

This word for “content” is used elsewhere as “enough”²⁵ or “sufficient.”²⁶ Having food, shelter, and clothing is enough for contentment.²⁷

But wouldn't having even more create even more contentment? No. It doesn't. Why not?

First, because we get used to it. In research, this is called the “Hedonic Treadmill.”²⁸ We buy something new. We get a boost in income. Our investments go up. Those things are exciting for a moment. Then they fade. We return to our baseline experience. We get used to it.

Chasing these brief flurries of feeling is like catching a snowflake on the tongue. In an instant, the feeling disappears. It doesn't last. It also creates other problems.

It leads to disillusionment. The poor person who believes that wealth will bring happiness has hope. The rich person loses that hope. After the quick bump from a change in wealth or consumption, he returns to baseline. He feels the same. What he had hoped in fails. This can lead to despair.

Sometimes, that despair can lead to bingeing. Bingeing leads to addiction and depression. It makes the person worse off. The rich addict can suffer more than the poor one. His self-destruction can be more extreme.

Even without such poor choices, having more creates another problem. It makes life more complicated. The things we own also own us. This can make contentment harder.

Trading a modest home for a palatial estate is fun and exciting. But we get used to it. It becomes normal. We return to our baseline experience. Except now, we have more problems.

We have more building maintenance and repairs. We have more grounds work. We have more cleaning. Even hosting a gathering gets bigger and more complicated. We just can't keep up with it on our own.

That estate requires a staff. We have to hire people. We have to manage them. We have to motivate them. We have to make sure they aren't stealing things. Sometimes, we have to fire them.

Before, our income needs were low. We were free to use more of it. Now, that freedom fades. We have a monthly payroll to meet. We have bigger utilities, bigger repairs, and more upkeep.

We're suddenly in charge of a major operation. It's more stress and anxiety. Ironically, it was all intended to increase our satisfaction. But that's not how the experience turns out.

Ask someone who has built wealth to consider their own contentment during their life. Suppose they went to college and lived in a dorm. Their housing space was small and communal. Were they sad, then? Likely not. They had enough for contentment.

When they were first married, they may have had very little wealth. Was that a sad time of life? Likely not. They had enough for contentment.

In 1 Timothy 6:8, Paul is not selling asceticism. He's not selling painful suffering. He's doing the opposite. He's selling contentment. He's pointing out the way to enjoyment. He's telling the truth.

The abundance calculation

How much is enough for contentment? In math terms, it's Length X Height. Length equals the length of remaining life:

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either.” (1 Timothy 6:7).

Our spending needs have a hard limit. We don't need stuff after we're dead. Once life ends, we can't use it. We can't use money then. That's the endpoint.

Height is the daily amount we need for contentment. How much is this? It's actually not that much:

“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:8).

We start with expected Length X Height. Then we subtract expected income (or other supply).²⁹ That difference is enough. Accumulating more than that difference is more than enough. Once we accumulate that much, everything else becomes abundance. It's extra. We can freely enjoy it.

How much stored wealth does that take? That depends. It depends upon our level of trust. It depends on the degree to which we have,

“Not set our hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

Suppose we have high trust. If we trust in God to richly supply our needs in the future, this need for accumulation collapses to nearly zero. We don't need an accumulation because God will provide. Everything becomes extra.

Everything becomes an abundance. In the words of 1 Timothy 6:6,

“But religion does make your life rich, by making you content with what you have.” (1 Timothy 6:6 CEV).

But let's be more “realistic.” Suppose our trust isn't quite that high. Then we need more wealth. What if an injury happens and we can't earn income as expected? We might use up all the stored money. So then, we need to pile up more. Or we can buy a financial product like disability insurance.

But we can still have fear. What if we live an exceptionally long time? We might use up all the money. So then, we need to pile up more. Or we can buy a financial product like a deferred annuity.

But we can still have fear. What if inflation makes money worth much less? We might use up all the money. So then, we need to pile up more. Or we can buy a financial product like inflation-protected government bonds.

But we can still have fear. What if we need to go into a nursing home? We won't want a government-funded option. We'll want a nicer one. We might use up all the money. So then, we need to pile up more. Or we can buy a financial product like nursing home insurance.

But we can still have fear. What if we get sued? What if the market collapses? What if the government collapses? What if the currency collapses? What if the insurance company collapses? What if there's a war? What if there's a revolution? What if the government takes our stuff? What if a thief breaks in and steals? What if moths and rust destroy? When fears are limited, we can address each one. But fears can be unlimited.

We can always have fear. And fear leads to burying wealth. It leads to burying it in the ground:

“And I was afraid, so I went away and hid your talent in the ground.” (Matthew 25:25).

It leads to hiding it in a napkin:

“here is your mina, which I kept tucked away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid” (Luke 19:20b-21a).

The temptation is to bury wealth rather than use it. In 1706, Matthew Henry wrote of 1 Timothy 6:17-19,

“for many have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them.”³⁰

Getting to abundance requires having the heart to overcome fear. It requires trust. To the extent that we can place our trust in a richly providing God, our abundance increases. To the extent that we place our trust in the uncertainty of riches, our abundance decreases.

From wealth to abundance

Wealth is different from abundance. A miser might have \$50 million in investments, but he won't have any extra. He won't have any abundance. He'll still desperately grasp every dollar.

This isn't just theory. Only one in five households with an actual net worth over \$50 million reported feeling “extremely financially secure.”³¹ One in ten felt “somewhat insecure.” Even great riches can feel insufficient. This experience is not a life of abundance.

Rich Christians not only have wealth, but they can also have an abundance. They know who holds their future. They know who will provide for them. They have more abundance

because of a previous (perfect tense) decision. They have – already in the past – put their hope in the right place. They have

“not ... set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

They have already done this. But reminding them helps create abundance. Their future is secured. It's secured by the up-close and personal, ongoing, continuing, rich supplier of all things we need for enjoyment.

This security helps move rich Christians to having more than enough. The amount of wealth that they're compelled to bury goes down. Fear decreases. This creates available wealth. It creates “extra” wealth.

Jesus encourages giving in Luke 12:33. He starts by first addressing fear. He explains,

“For this reason I tell you, do not worry about your life, as to what you are to eat; nor for your body, as to what you are to wear ... your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be provided to you.” (Luke 12:22b, 30b-31).

Joyful giving starts by having extra. Having extra starts by trusting in God. It starts by trusting in God's earthly provision. It starts by setting our hope

“on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17b).

This trust increases abundance. As abundance increases, sharing becomes more fun. It becomes easier. It's

easy to share when we feel that,

“I’ve got more than enough for me. I’ve got extra. Plus, there will be plenty more where that came from. And besides, I can’t take it with me anyway!”

That feeling makes sharing enjoyable. It makes it open-handed. It makes it free and easy.

Paul creates “extra” wealth

Paul’s message turns wealth into abundance. It turns “never enough” into “more than enough.” It turns hidden wealth into available wealth. It turns wealth into extra wealth.

Fundraisers often fear wealth conversations. Paul focuses on them. They’re key to major gift fundraising. They can change wealth into “extra” wealth. If donors have “extra” wealth, they can give big. If donors have “extra” wealth, they can share freely, easily, and joyfully. They become “ready” for *eu*-sharing.

Fundraisers like to talk about their organizations. And that’s fine. But just talking about a great organization doesn’t change the donor. It’s not ministering to the donor.

Paul’s fundraising message does include the impact of the donor’s gift. But it’s mostly about the donor’s wealth. It’s about their wealth plans and their wealth management. It is these wealth conversations that can really transform the donor.

Once wealth becomes “extra” wealth, giving can skyrocket. Major gifts – gifts of wealth sharing – become natural, easy, and enjoyable. The donor becomes truly ready to share.

Modern research on abundance and giving

Just having wealth won't necessarily lead to giving. What's important is having "extra" wealth.

One national study found a similar result. Wealth holdings predicted giving to some degree. But something else was more important. A person's feelings about the adequacy of their wealth were more important. Subjective wealth feelings were a better predictor of giving than actual wealth holdings.³² Being subjectively wealthy led to giving. Being objectively wealthy often didn't.

One of the most important transformations for donors happens when they realize they have extra. This is why wealth conversations can be so powerful. They're often a key part of becoming ready to give. This can happen even outside of the context of fundraising or ministry.

Financial planning can lead to generosity. Research studies show that the ability to budget, monitor, and control wealth helps people actually feel wealthy.³³ People who feel wealthy give more.

Estate planning can also lead to generosity. Consider the process. It requires people to list all their assets. It makes them contemplate how long they will live. It makes them estimate how much "extra" will be left over at the end of life.

Some people going through estate planning are charitable. They'll include a charitable gift in their will. What follows this is dramatic. Their giving is often transformed. On average, annual giving spikes 77% after charitable estate planning. This increase is sustained 2 years, 4 years, 6 years, even 8 years later.³⁴ The share of those making gifts of \$10,000 or more nearly doubles.

The charitable transformation from this one event is dramatic. It's massive. It's lasting. What happened?

- They planned for their death.
- They estimated the extra that would be left unused.
- They considered their charitable goals.

This process forces a recognition of having extra. Facing the magnitude of leftover wealth – extra wealth – can have a powerful effect. Facing this question is exactly how Paul opens his discussion of wealth. In 1 Timothy 6:7, he opens with an estate-planning reminder.

Estate planning is required only for leftover wealth. This is wealth we won't consume before we die. For donors, calculating this extra wealth can help them to be ready. It can help them to be ready to share freely, easily, and joyfully. It can help them to be ready to share from abundance. It can help them to be *eu*-sharers.

Bury it and die with it: Leaving a big inheritance

Wealth can be buried to provide for one's future. But at some point, even those with low trust often realize that they have more than enough. They've accumulated more than they're going to spend. So now what? One option is to leave it as an inheritance.

Should we do this? Indeed, we should provide for the family. Paul explains,

“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8).

And also,

“If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are actually widows.” (1 Timothy 5:16).

We should provide for our family. But how much? The answer starts with the same question:

“How much money do they need for contentment?”

The answer is still the same. The answer is

“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:18).

If a rich Christian plans to leave an inheritance, that’s fine. But leave the right amount. The right amount is enough for regular living. It should be enough for food, clothing, and shelter. Leaving dramatically more than that does not lead to more contentment. In fact, it often causes real damage. It can end much worse than if there had been no inheritance. The prodigal son said,

“Father, give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.” (Luke 15:12b).

He got his inheritance. And his life got dramatically worse. It got so bad that he says,

“I am dying here” (Luke 15:17b).

The too-rich widow may also end up worse off. She may become one

“who lives in self-indulgence”³⁵ or “who indulges herself in luxury” (1 Timothy 5:6).

This result is not happy. It’s sad. She

“is dead even while she lives.” (1 Timothy 5:6)³⁶

Bingeing on excess inheritance leads to death. It can lead to living while feeling dead inside. It can lead to spiritual death. In the case of addictions, it can lead to physical death.

Providing for family is important. We don't want to leave family who become a burden on the church. But leaving too much can be disastrous.

Leaving buried wealth can have other bad results. It often leads to a divided family. In Luke 12:13, Jesus found himself in the middle of a family probate fight. Brother was divided against brother because of an inheritance. Jesus refused to get involved. (Luke 12:14). He then turned to the crowd watching this and said, "Beware!" (Luke 12:15).

The crowd was seeing the result of buried wealth. They were seeing a divided family. Jesus then told them the story of the rich fool. The fool was richly blessed with wealth. And he just stacked it up in a barn and died with it. That was dumb. God called him a fool.

Leaving enough for family is fine. Leaving more than enough is dangerous. It's often harmful. It may even be foolish.

Recognizing abundance

Recognizing abundance is a key part of being ready to share. We must have wealth to share wealth. But also, we must feel that we have extra.

In Jesus parables, the burying bad stewards had money or wealth. But they never used it. Their motivation was always

the same. They hid money “because I was afraid”. (Luke 19:21).³⁷ Or they explained,

“So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground.” (Matthew 25:25).³⁸

Fear drives the burying bad steward. Addressing these fears can help. It can turn wealth into abundance. It can help the person to become ready to share.

How can we do this? Estate or financial planning might help them realize they already have enough. For specific fears, a financial product might help. But ultimately, eliminating financial fear comes from one place. It comes from having set our hope

“on God, who richly and ceaselessly provides us with everything” (1 Timothy 6:17b)³⁹

Or, as Hebrews 13:5 puts it,

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” (NIV).

If we place our hope in this God, we can have abundance. If we don’t, we can’t.

These wealth conversations are powerful. They can lead to an awareness of abundance. They can lead to an awareness of having “a sufficiency of the necessities of life” [*autarkeia*].⁴⁰ This becomes the source not for a gift but for a lifetime of giving. It helps the rich Christian to be ready to joyfully share wealth from abundance.

What about those with no wealth?

Wealth attitudes, wealth feelings, and wealth theology are important. However, one objective reality remains. A

person must have wealth to share wealth. This ministry is a ministry to the wealth holders. It's to the rich.

So, what about those who aren't holding wealth? What should they do? Paul gives an interesting answer: Start saving it up! He explains,

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you are to do as well. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save as he may prosper, so that no collections need to be made when I come.” (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

This translation notes that,

“put aside and save” is literally “put with himself.”

Another translation uses,

“let every one of you put apart with himself”.⁴¹

Others use,

“let each person of you lay aside in his house”⁴²

“put on one side and store up at his home”⁴³

“put by at home”⁴⁴

“put aside and keep in his house”⁴⁵

“put aside at home”⁴⁶.

Several use,

“lay by him in store”.⁴⁷

One commentary renders this as,

“let every one place it with himself.”⁴⁸

Another explains,

“1 Corinthians 16:2 suggests that each person will store up money at home, and pool it only on Paul's arrival.”⁴⁹

The direction is to accumulate wealth designated for charitable purposes. (This is like a first-century donor advised fund.) If you don't have it, Paul says, save it up so that you will have it. That's part of getting ready. Through this weekly process of setting aside, one accumulates riches. But these aren't just riches. They're "extra" riches. They're held in preparation for the charitable gift.

This process helps donors to get ready. It helps them get ready to give. More importantly, it helps them get ready to joyfully share wealth from abundance.

This will be a large gift, but it feels more comfortable. It's just a small amount set aside each week. A small amount is an easy step.

Setting aside is also more comfortable. The donor hasn't given up anything yet. The money is still in the donor's possession. Only its label has changed. Relabeling is an easy step.

Holding it at home feels more enjoyable. Each day the donor is reminded of his own generosity. He sees it physically grow. He is reminded of his upcoming charitable impact. That expands the donor's enjoyment.

The final gift transfer is also more comfortable. At the moment of transfer, the donor gets the joy of making a large gift. But he need not feel the offsetting pain. That money has already been set aside. Its purpose has already been fixed. The donor was just temporarily managing it. The transfer just finishes that task. That's an easy step.

Through these steps, the donor becomes entirely ready to joyfully share wealth from abundance. The donor gets to enjoy giving like a steward. This is not just fundraising. It's

training in holding wealth open-handedly.⁵⁰ It's training in scriptural wealth management.

Why “ready” is the key

Giving, of course, is important. But it's a single event. Being ready to share is different. In 1 Timothy 6:18 *eumetadotous* is an adjective. It modifies the donor's identity statement, *einai*. It's not an event. It's an ongoing description of who the donor is being.

Being ready to share wealth freely, easily, and joyfully is not a one-time event. It describes a continuing attitude towards wealth. This is not hoarding wealth like the greedy. This is not rejecting wealth like the ascetic. This is holding but holding lightly. It's holding open-handedly.

This wealth holding recognizes the source of the wealth.⁵¹ God is the one who richly provides all things. It recognizes the purpose of the wealth. God gave it to us for enjoyment. It recognizes the process for the wealth enjoyment:

- We enjoy it by using it to do good right now. (Ongoing present)
- We enjoy it by accumulating so many beautifully good works that we become rich in them. (Ongoing past)
- We enjoy it by holding it lightly, always ready to share generously as opportunities arise. (Ongoing future)

Being ready to share also means the donors know what they are trying to accomplish. They know what kind of good they want to do. They know how they want to be rich in good works. They know what kind of an impact they want to make.

How can donors get to “ready”? What helps is the authorized messenger who comes alongside. The goal is not

simply “fund-raising” or “money-getting.” The ministry is not focused on the one-time event of writing a check. Instead, the aim is an ongoing condition of the heart.⁵² It’s about helping the donor to be ready – ready to joyfully share wealth from abundance. In a single word, it’s about helping the donor to be *eumetadotous*.

¹ New King James Version

² World English Bible; *See also*, “ready to distribute, willing to communicate” King James Version; American Standard Version; English Revised Version; New Heart English Bible; Webster’s Bible Translation; *Also*, “ready to impart, willing to communicate” Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation.

³ New American Standard Bible; English Standard Version; Berean Standard Bible; *See also*, “generous in distributing, ready to share” Berean Literal Bible.

⁴ New Living Translation

⁵ The definition of either word includes the idea of readiness. For example, see *eumetadotous*, “ready to give, liberal” and also *koinōnikous*, “ready to communicate, liberal” in Berry, G. R. (1897). *A new Greek-English lexicon to the New Testament*. Hinds & Noble.

⁶ Aramaic Bible in Plain English; Similarly, “to be ready to give away and to share” in Hanson, A. T. (1966). *The pastoral letters: Commentary on the first and second letters to Timothy and the letter to Titus*. Cambridge University Press. p. 72.

⁷ DeWelt, D. (1961). *Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus*. College Press. 126.

⁸ New International Version; Amplified Bible; Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible; *See also* New Testament for Everyone, “eager to share”.

⁹ Such “pocket change” fundraising is more akin to the work of a beggar. This relies primarily on (1) grabbing attention from the public and (2) creating instant reactive empathy. For the beggar, attention might come from shaking a coin cup, moaning, asking, sitting in a high-traffic area, and seeking eye contact or conversation. The empathetic image comes from their dress or appearance. Small gift direct marketing to the general public often relies on these same elements: grabbing attention and creating instant reactive empathy. Thus, novelty in presentation (e.g., attaching a coin to an envelope) and empathetic images are commonly effective.

¹⁰ Being ready can also dramatically increase the impact from giving. The largest impact often comes from giving during an “opportune moment.” As Charles Bridges explained of the passage in 1850, “A little given in time of need is more than a larger sum when the time is gone by. We should cultivate a quick sensibility of others... not only ‘doing good,’ but ‘ready to every good work.’... seizing the present, perhaps the only, opportunity; rather anticipating the need, than wantonly or thoughtlessly delaying to relieve it.” [Bridges, C. (1850). *An exposition of the Book of Proverbs*. R. Carter Publishers. p. 34-35.]

¹¹ Indeed, given the time required for the subsequent travel, this point was still some months away when Paul wrote the letter.

¹² *See, e.g.*, New Living Translation, English Standard Version, GOD’S WORD® Translation, Good News Translation, International Standard Version, New American Bible, New English Translation (NET) Bible, and New Revised Standard Version.

¹³ Panas, J. (2007, March 1). *Fundraising’s four magic questions: Answer these and the gift is yours*. Guidestar. [Blog]. <https://trust.guidestar.org/fundraisings-four-magic-questions-answer-these-and-the-gift-is-yours>

¹⁴ Wohlman, J. (2020). *Practice the ask and negotiation (part 3)*. [Video transcript]. Major and principal gifts course. University of California, Davis.

<https://www.coursera.org/lecture/major-principal-gifts/practice-the-ask-and-negotiation-part-3-bxhL5>

¹⁵ Wohlman, J. (2020). *Practice the ask and negotiation (part 3)*. [Video transcript]. Major and principal gifts course. University of California, Davis.

<https://www.coursera.org/lecture/major-principal-gifts/practice-the-ask-and-negotiation-part-3-bxhL5>

¹⁶ Fredricks, L. (2001). *Developing major gifts: Turning small donors into big contributors*. Aspen Publishers, Inc. p. 117.

¹⁷ Melvin, A. (2020, October 7-9). *Solicitation preparation: The keys to a successful ask*. [Paper presentation]. Charitable Gift Planning Conference, online, p. 10.

¹⁸ Managementcentre. (2016, March 11). *7 Steps of Solicitation* [Website]. managementcentre.co.uk/fundraising/7-steps-of-solicitation/

¹⁹ Grover, S. R. (2006). *Capital campaigns: A guide for board members and others who aren't professional fundraisers but who will be the heroes who create a better community*. iUniverse. p. 105.

²⁰ Pitman, M. A. (2008). *Ask without fear! A simple guide to connecting donors with what matters to them most*. Tremendous Life Books. p. 44.

²¹ Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company.

²² He uses *autarkeia* in 1 Timothy 6:6 and 2 Corinthians 9:8. He uses the adjectival form *autarkēs* in Philippians 4:11.

²³ "The letter is written in large measure to thank the Philippians for their generous financial gift." Post, T. L. (2019). *Doing "the good" in the Apostle Paul's ethical vision* (Doctoral dissertation). Asbury Theological Seminary. p. 314.

²⁴ Malcom Borden writes that 1 Timothy 6:18 references "the discretionary wealth entrusted to us." (Emphasis added.) [Borden, M. J. (2016). *Godly living with contentment for every Christian: We are now becoming what we are going to be*. WestBow Press.]

²⁵ Matthew 25:9; John 14:8

²⁶ John 6:7; 2 Corinthians 12:9

²⁷ Here, "covering" includes both shelter and clothing. The Greek word is *skepasmata* from *skepasma* meaning "Chiefly clothing, but also house" [Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2021). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (4th ed., p. 824). University of Chicago Press]; an interlinear translation renders the word in 1 Timothy 6:6 as "shelter-effects" and "protective-covering." [Concordant Publishing Concern. (2009). *Concordant Greek text sublinear* (Version 1.5). Concordant Publishing Concern.]

²⁸ See, e.g., Botta, N. L., & Truglia, R. P. (2011). Deconstructing the hedonic treadmill: Is happiness autoregressive? *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 40(3), 224-236.

²⁹ For example, other types of future supply could include things like owning a home which thereby eliminates the need for paying rent.

³⁰ Henry, M. (1706/1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible* (6 vols.). Hendrickson Publishers. p. 2359.

³¹ Rooney, P. M. & Frederick, H. K. (2007). *Portraits of donors: Bank of America study of high net-worth philanthropy*. The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. p. 11.

³² Wiepking, P., & Breeze, B. (2012). Feeling poor, acting stingy: The effect of

money perceptions on charitable giving. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 17(1), 13-24.

³³ Gasiorowska, A. (2014). The relationship between objective and subjective wealth is moderated by financial control and mediated by money anxiety. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 43, 64-74.

³⁴ James III, R. N. (2019). The emerging potential of longitudinal empirical research in estate planning: Examples from charitable bequests. *UC Davis Law Review*, 53, 2397-2431.

³⁵ Legacy Standard Bible

³⁶ Legacy Standard Bible

³⁷ Christian Standard Bible

³⁸ New International Version

³⁹ Amplified Bible

⁴⁰ *Autarkeia* in Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company.

⁴¹ Douay-Rheims Bible

⁴² Aramaic Bible in Plain English

⁴³ Weymouth New Testament

⁴⁴ Darby Bible Translation

⁴⁵ Lamsa Bible

⁴⁶ “put a syde at home” Tyndale Bible of 1526.

⁴⁷ King James Version; American Standard Version; English Revised Version; Webster’s Bible Translation

⁴⁸ Benson explains why this cannot be referencing the placing of money into a common church fund, writing, “But the words *ekastos par eautō tithetō*, let every one place it with himself, admit not of this sense; nor, when each of them had done this, could there be any necessity of making collections; or, as that expression imports, soliciting the charities of others, but only of receiving the contributions thus laid by for the use of the saints.” [Benson, J. (1857). *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*. T. Carlton & J. Porter Publishers.]

The counterargument is that, despite the direct meaning of this phrase, if one were not to place the funds weekly in a common church fund, then “collections” [*logeiai*] would still need to be made. However, if the meaning of the term is more one of “fundraising,” i.e., “soliciting the charities of others,” then the conflict disappears. The idea is that no fundraising campaign is necessary when Paul comes because everyone is prepared in advance with the amount they will bring. This word for collection, *logeia*, was not found in secular authors or elsewhere in the Bible. Yet, it is from the common word *lego*, which can mean to collect, but can also mean to exhort, instruct, or ask. This broader sense of the root word supports Benson’s description.

⁴⁹ Barclay, J. M. G. (2016). *Pauline churches and diaspora Jews*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 115.

⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 6:18, Weymouth New Testament reads, “They must be beneficent, rich in noble deeds, open-handed and liberal;” What is the opposite of *eumetadotous*? The Pulpit Commentary suggests, “The opposite, ‘close-handed,’ is *dysmetadotos*.” [Hervey, A. C. (1884). 1 Timothy. In Spence, H. D. M., & Exell, J. S.

(Eds.), *The pulpit commentary*. Funk & Wagnalls. p. 123.] This word, *dysmetadotos*, means difficult to share or communicate.

⁵¹ As one commentator on this passage puts it, “Since all they possess has come from God (v. 17), the rich are to assume a healthy attitude of detachment toward their wealth” [Towner, P. H. (1994). *1-2 Timothy & Titus*. InterVarsity Press. p. 148.]

⁵² “ready to distribute—free givers [Alford]; the heart not cleaving to possessions, but ready to impart to others.” [Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D. (1873). *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown commentary, critical and explanatory on the whole Bible*. S. S. Scranton. p. 419.]

Chapter 13

Message 11: You're one of us!

- *Biblical fundraising connects the donor to a fellowship community [koinōnia] through sharing [koinōnikous].*
- *Ordinary fundraising asks to give away to outsiders.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready **to share**, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

You're one of us!

A key goal of this ministry is for the rich Christian to be *koinōnikous*. This version translates it, "to share," but it means much more. It's an adjective modifying the donor's "I am" statement [*einai*]. It's describing who the donor is being, not just what he is doing. The rich Christian joins together with the fellowship community – the *koinōnia*. This comes from being a sharer with the *koinōnia*. This is being *koinōnikous*.

Professor Don Dewelt explains *koinōnikous* in 1 Timothy 6:18 by writing that the goal is to

"feel a partnership with every other Christian."¹

The goal here is not just fundraising. It's not just a charitable transfer. Instead, it's a personal transformation. The rich Christians' ongoing identity, *einai*, changes. They become fellowship community sharers.

This is partnership language. It's community language.

It's family language. It's emotional bonding language. It answers a core question:

“Do we belong together?”

Many will say the answer is no. The world may feel that rich Christians are above poor Christians. The ascetics will feel that rich Christians are less than poor Christians – especially the voluntarily poor Christians. In either case, these attitudes lead to separation. They lead to breaking community.

This is the opposite of *koinōnikous*. *Koinōnikous* connects with the *koinōnia*. It's an active affirmation of belonging. It's the donor saying, “I belong with you!” It's the recipient-sharer saying, “You belong with us!” It's the fellow donor saying, “You belong with us!” It's the ministry worker saying, “You belong with us!” It's the unified fellowship community saying, “We belong together!”

Community as the ministry goal

What's the goal of fundraising? From a secular perspective, that's simple. Fund = money. Raising = getting. The goal of fund-raising is money-getting.

What if we asked the same question of fundraisers for a Christian ministry? What if we asked,

“What's the ministry goal of your fundraising?”

Their response will likely be all about various plans to spend the donor's money. This “fund-raising” is still just “money-getting.” They need fund-raising because they need money. Why else would they engage in “money-getting” if not for the money?

Those ministry uses of money are fine. But that isn't the goal of this ministry. In Greek, our passage begins with “To the

rich” [*Tois plousiois*]. This isn’t a ministry to the organization. It’s not even a ministry to the beneficiaries. This is a ministry to the rich Christians.

And, what is our ministry goal for rich Christians? What do we want for them? We want them to enjoy their wealth. (That’s the purpose for which God gave it to them in the first place.) We want them to do good. We want them to be rich in good works. We want them to be good (ready-happy-abundance) sharers. And here, we want them to be deeply bonded fellowship-community members. We want them to be *koinōnikous*.

This last goal is important for all Christians. But it’s a special challenge for rich Christians. Being rich might make the first goals easier. Wealth can help them to do good. It can help them to be rich in good works. It can help them become sharers of abundance.

But wealth doesn’t always help with *koinōnikous*. In fact, wealth usually has the opposite effect. It can block them from bonding with the fellowship community. Wealth can separate. It can isolate.

Wealth and separation from community

Solomon writes,

“A rich person’s wealth is his strong city,
And like a high wall in his own imagination.” (Proverbs 18:11).

Wealth is like a high wall. That high wall can protect. But it can also separate. It can lead to isolation. Isaiah writes,

“Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.” (Isaiah 5:8 NIV).

Wealth can naturally lead to social isolation. We call the financial condition being “independently wealthy.” That sounds good at first. But independence also allows for disconnection. It enables isolation.

Wealth makes social separation easy, even convenient. Suppose we need help on a big project. What are our options? If we have no money, then we need friends. We need family. We’re forced to connect socially. Otherwise, the project is impossible.

But if we have money, we don’t need to connect. We can just write a check. We can pay other people to do what we need.

Using money this way is more convenient. It’s faster. It avoids having to pay back obligations when others are in need. When you’re rich, friendships aren’t mandatory. But this quick and easy solution has a problem. It can lead to social isolation.

Wealth can lead to isolation in other ways. Suppose a new person is friendly to you. They want to spend time with you. They want to build a relationship with you. How do you feel?

Now, let’s change one thing. You’re rich. This person knows you’re rich. Everyone knows you’re rich. Does this change how you might feel? Might it add any suspicion?

What if you’ve had previous experiences with others who behaved this same way? Ultimately, they ended up just wanting money. When that didn’t happen, their friendliness disappeared. Might this change how you feel? Might it add any suspicion? Wealth can make a person suspicious of others. It can lead to distrust.

So, what's the solution to this isolation? A common option is to associate only with other rich people. You trust them because of their wealth. They aren't being nice just because you have wealth, and they don't. They already have wealth. They already have status. This allows for mutual community with less distrust.

Except there's a problem. It's a big problem. You can have community, but your community is contingent. It's contingent upon your wealth. If your wealth disappears, so does your community. You would no longer qualify. You could no longer be trusted.

This makes your wealth holding even more desperate. A loss of money doesn't just mean less consumption. It means a loss of community. The risk is not just scarcity. It's also isolation.

Facing this peril leads to desperate behavior. Wealth must be tightly grasped. Its loss risks losing community. It risks losing standing. It risks losing identity.

These rich are in peril. They are in need. They have a ministry need. This need can be filled by being *koinōnikous*. It's fulfilled by becoming a closely connected, fellowship-community sharer.

We belong together: Paul explains why

Being *koinōnikous* requires the shared belief that we all belong together. The rich person is one of us. Our passage explains why this is true. It does so with many arguments. It

explains that wealth differences are not important. Why?

- Because, unlike our fellowship bond, these wealth differences are temporary (“rich in this present world”). Therefore, we belong together!
- Because rich Christians do not see themselves as being above the fellowship community (“not high-minded”). Therefore, we belong together!
- Because, unlike our fellowship bond, these wealth differences are highly unstable (“the uncertainty of riches”). Therefore, we belong together!
- Because God has richly supplied each of us, just in different ways (“God who richly supplies us with all things”). Therefore, we belong together!
- Because we all use whatever God has richly supplied in the same way (“richly supplies **us** with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share”). Therefore, we belong together!

The message is clear. We belong together.

This sense of community is embedded even in the form of the instruction. Timothy is not to beg from below. (Begging from below matches with *eleēmosynē*, not *koinōnikous*.) He is not to attack from above. (The high-mindedness of the religious ascetic or class-conflict warrior is not welcome.) Instead, he is to *parangelle*. He is to come alongside, *para*, with an authorized message, *angelle*.

We belong together: Paul and James agree

The goal is *koinōnikous*. It’s sharing as a form of bonding together with the fellowship community.

Understanding this helps explain why Paul's ministry to the rich exactly matches James's admonition in James 2:2-4.

James describes a scene. Two people enter the assembly. Immediately, they are split apart. Why? Because one of them looked rich and the other didn't. The behavior has a clear message: "You don't belong together!"

The poor person is directed to sit,
"on the floor by my feet" (NIV).
Or,
"under my footstool" (KJV).

This is the position of the poor beggar asking for alms [*eleēmosynē*] in Acts 3:2. This is not a shared fellowship community. This is a broken community. This is a community separated by wealth differences. This was antithetical to James. It was also antithetical to Paul.

Paul directs a ministry to the rich. It's a ministry of connection. It more strongly connects the rich person into the fellowship community. It doesn't ignore the wealth differences. Instead, it puts them in their proper place.

These wealth differences are just temporary circumstances. They're circumstances like being a poor widow, or a servant, or an older man, or a younger woman. Each set of circumstances results in special ministry needs. Each ministry comes with special instructions. But each ministry helps build a unified fellowship community.

Giving as fellowship participation

When we provide this ministry, we don't just ask donors to give away. We offer a means of participation. We offer a way

to connect with a community. We offer a method of active fellowship.² This is *koinōnia*-sharing. This is sharing with a mutually reciprocal fellowship community.

These ideas aren't just from 1 Timothy 6:18. They're consistent throughout the New Testament church. They're embedded in the concept of *koinōnia*. For example, the NASB translates this word as "contribution" in Romans 15:26 and 2 Corinthians 9:13. And that's accurate. It's "sharing" in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and Hebrews 13:16. And that's accurate, too.

But what we miss is that the same Greek word translated as "contribution" or "sharing" appears elsewhere. It's "participation" in 2 Corinthians 8:4 and Philippians 1:5. It's "fellowship" in Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Galatians 2:9; Philippians 2:1, 3:10; Philemon 1:6; and 1 John 1:3, 1:6, 1:7.

This kind of giving is a "contribution." It's also "sharing." It's also "participation." It's also "fellowship." It's all the same word. It's all one unified concept.

Offering just one part without the others isn't the same thing. It's not *koinōnia*-sharing. It's not offering the chance to be *koinōnikous*. Every charity offers donors the chance to contribute. That, by itself, isn't this kind of giving. Offering this kind of giving means offering all the parts together.

We can do fundraising wrong. How? Henri Nouwen explains,

"We also will be cut off from our donors, because we will find ourselves begging for money and they will find themselves merely handing us a check. No real connection has been created because we have not asked them to come and be with us. We have not given them

an opportunity to participate in the spirit of what we are about. We may have completed a successful transaction, but we have not entered into a successful relationship.”³

Should we offer donors opportunities for participation? Yes. Should we offer fellowship? Yes. This isn’t just a strategy. It’s a definition. Without these, we aren’t offering donors the chance to fulfill this New Testament instruction. We aren’t offering them a chance to make this kind of gift. If they want to experience this kind of giving, they must give elsewhere.

Fellowship-community sharing creates joy

These instructions work together. We offer the donor an identity: *einai*. It’s an identity as an intensely bonded fellowship-community sharer: *einai koinōnikous*. This is powerful. It helps deliver all of the other donor experiences described in the passage.

The instruction is to enjoy wealth. What kind of giving does this? Modern secular research explored this question. Of course, it didn’t use the term “fellowship community.” Instead, it referenced giving that generated “relatedness need satisfaction.” In technical terms, the research showed that

“charitable behavior was positively associated with both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, and these relationships were mediated by relatedness need satisfaction.”⁴

Giving led to enjoyment. It led to surface-level, “hedonic” well-being. (This was measured by questions such as, “When I engage in this activity, I feel good.”) It also led to deeper “eudaimonic” well-being. (This was measured by questions such as, “When I engage in this activity, I feel that this is what I was meant to do.”)

Giving led to both types of enjoyment. It did so through a specific mechanism. It did so through social connectedness. (It changed the answers to questions such as, “I feel closer to others.”)

When giving connects us to a fellowship community, it’s not just giving away. It’s giving “with” or “among” others. (It’s not just *dotous*; it’s *metadotous*.) As one book on fundraising explains,

“Giving, no matter what the level, is a whole lot more enjoyable when done in community and with friends.”⁵

Giving in this way brings joy. It can also help accomplish the other outcomes described in this passage.

When we share in close community, we can more easily see the difference that a gift makes. We can see the work [*ergon*]. We can see that it accomplishes something. We can see the intrinsic good [*agatho-ergein*] that it does. We can inspire fellow community members with our beautiful, visible, noble good works [*ergois kalois*]. Each of these, in turn, makes giving more enjoyable. Each helps use wealth for enjoyment [*eis apolausin*].

Building multiple fellowship communities

This fellowship-community sharing is possible across many groups. It might be a donor-beneficiary community. Paul describes this in 2 Corinthians 8:13-14 and 9:13-14. The Corinthian donors and Jerusalem beneficiaries are to be closely connected and reciprocal.

However, fellowship-community sharing is possible even without such beneficiary connections. It’s possible even if the gift supports a cause or a message rather than specific beneficiaries. This might come from a donor-donor

community.⁶ Paul describes this in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 and 9:2-4. The Corinthian donors motivate the Macedonian donors, who motivate the Corinthian donors. They all share together within this donor-donor community.

Fellowship-community sharing can also arise between donors and the ministry leadership. Paul describes the Philippians' gifts as expressions of fellowship with him. They express "concern for me." (Philippians 4:10b). They're *koinōnia* (1:5) and *ekoinōnēsen* (4:15). Paul explains,

"no church had fellowship [*ekoinōnēsen*] with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only;" (Philippians 4:15b ERV; ASV).

Paul expands this fellowship community well beyond just himself. He sends his fellow workers to meet with donors. He sends his partner [*koinōnos*] and fellow-worker [*synergos*] Titus. (2 Corinthians 8:23). He sends his fellow-worker [*synergon*] Epaphroditus. (Philippians 2:25). He sends his fellow servant Timothy. (Philippians 1:1, 2:19). He sends other ministry workers who are well known to the donors. (2 Corinthians 8:18-19, 22)

We can do the same things. We can build fellowship communities across multiple groups. We can connect donors to recipients. We can connect donors to donors. We can connect donors to charity leaders. How do we do this? There are many ways.

Gathering together works. Special events might help accomplish this. Advisory boards can, too. Getting people to visit can work. Getting donors to visit the ministry or outreach can be powerful. These are effective modern fundraising strategies. They're also effective ancient fundraising strategies.

Perhaps nothing works better in fundraising than this simple directive: “Go see people.”⁷ In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, we have Paul’s fundraising appeal letter. In Philippians 1 & 4, we have his gift acknowledgment letter. In fundraising parlance, these were both “direct mail” pieces. But notice something important. These weren’t stand-alone fundraising pieces. Each also referenced a forthcoming “personal visit.”

In his fundraising appeal letter, he sends Titus. He lets them know, explicitly, that Titus is going there as a fundraiser. He writes,

“So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:6 NLT).”

In his gift acknowledgment, he sends Timothy to the donor congregation. (Philippians 2:19). He also returns Epaphroditus. (Philippians 4:18). Epaphroditus was a member of the donors’ congregation. He had visited the ministry and worked alongside Paul. (Philippians 2:25). This made him an ideal fellowship-community connector.

How do we build community with donors? We gather them together. We write to them. We visit them. We have them visit us. This is what worked 2,000 years ago. It’s what still works today.

Community sharing works: Real world

The rich are instructed to use their wealth to “*einai koinōnikous*”. They’re to use their wealth to become closely connected, fellowship-community sharers.

Will writing a check do this? That depends. If the charity is offering fellowship-community connection to the donor, then yes. Otherwise, no. Without a partnership, there

can be no partnership sharing. Without a neighborhood, there can be no “neighborliness.”⁸ Without a fellowship community, there can be no fellowship-community sharing. Without a *koinōnia*, there can be no *koinōnikous*.

This might feel like a great burden for the charity. After all, if fund-raising is just money-getting, this is a lot to do. It feels like a lot of extra effort. But here’s the thing. It works.

Consider this example. A dominant segment of major gift fundraising in the US is higher education. Traditional colleges build community intensively. Students live together on campus during their formative years. Alumni relive their experiences and renew community at games and reunion events.

What would happen to fundraising if we kept the college but removed the community? We know the answer. Community colleges offer the same classes but not the same community. Students just drive in and drive out.

The result? Community colleges serve nearly 50% of the nation’s college students. But they receive only 2% of charitable gifts to higher education.⁹ Even these few gifts rarely come from alumni. They’re largely from outside corporations and foundations. In fact, about half of these colleges conduct no alumni relations fundraising at all.¹⁰ All their fundraising looks to other sources. Without the community building of a traditional college, the giving disappears.

In our passage, wealthy Christians are to engage in fellowship-community sharing. In real-world practice, offering donor community to high-capacity donors works. It’s an effective fundraising strategy.

One analysis studied major donors to Bible translation. It reported,

“The most significant finding is that donors with the highest sense of involvement tended to give at the highest levels. Stated another way, those with the highest levels of giving reported the greatest levels of participation in the community of donors associated with the work of the [charity].”¹¹

The key finding for ministry-related fundraising success was this:

“a primary focus should be to aggressively build programs that enhance a sense of community among major donors.”¹²

This applies to all causes, not just Christian ones. One study conducted in-depth interviews with a hundred wealthy donors. The resulting book was *“Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy.”* It explained,

“In short, the vast majority of the largest gifts were made to nonprofits with which donors had some involvement, and/or grew out of donors’ relationships with other people, who in turn usually had some involvement with the organization. This was true of over 90 percent of all gifts made to the areas of health, education, culture, and to churches or temples.”¹³

Large gifts aren’t simply given away. They’re shared. They’re shared with a fellowship community. Large gifts start with social connections. Whether secular or religious, they start with connections to a fellowship community.

Are you offering these things?

In 1 Timothy 6:18, the rich Christian is directed

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share”.

This is what they’re supposed to do.

- They’re supposed to accomplish intrinsically good work [*agathoergein*].
- They’re supposed to accumulate inspirational, noble, visible, and attractive works that reflect their inner character [*ergois kalois*].
- They’re supposed to be good (joyful-ready-abundant) sharers [*eumetadotous einai*].
- They’re supposed to deeply connect with the mutually-sharing fellowship community [*koinōnia*] through their giving [*koinōnikous*].

Such a list feels comfortable – especially if you aren’t rich. This is what those people are supposed to do. These are the obligations or demands of the rich Christians.¹⁴

We might think these require nothing from us. These are instructions to the rich Christians. These are the rich Christians’ obligations, not ours.

Unless. Unless we’re fundraising. Think about it. The rich Christians are instructed to do these four things. If giving to our charity accomplishes this, it fulfills these obligations. Otherwise, it doesn’t. If we don’t offer these donor experiences, then they must give elsewhere. Otherwise, they won’t be following the instructions.

Suppose a charity does good things. The donor makes a gift of wealth. But the donor is never told what his particular

gift did. He never knows if his gift changed anything. He never knows if it made any difference.

Can this donor say that he has done good work? Not really. He actually has no idea what his gift has done. Doing good work is his obligation. Can this donor confidently say that he has fulfilled that obligation? Not really. He actually doesn't know. He can't tell. He can't say what good he is doing. He can't say how he is becoming rich in good works.

Can donors follow Paul's instructions by giving in this way? No. The charity is not offering them that opportunity. Donors can write checks. But if they want to follow these instructions, they must give elsewhere.

Suppose a charity uses guilt and obligation to get gifts. Are these gifts joyful? No. Are these donors being joyful sharers? No. So, are they being *eu*-sharers, or *eumetadotous*? No. If they want to follow that instruction, they must give elsewhere.

And finally, consider the last instruction. Suppose a charity offers no fellowship community to its donors. Giving creates no connection with other donors, recipients, or ministry workers. The donor's giving does not connect them into any fellowship community. It doesn't pull them closer into relationship with any *koinōnia*.

Can donors use their wealth to be *koinōnikous* at this organization? Can they become closely-connected fellowship-community sharers? Not here, they can't. The charity offers no community to donors. If donors want to follow that instruction, they must give elsewhere.

God has richly supplied them for a purpose. That purpose is for enjoyment. That enjoyment is experienced by

using their wealth

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be
eumetadotous and *koinōnikous*.” (1 Timothy 6:18).

If the charity isn't offering these things, donors must give elsewhere. Otherwise, they're ignoring God's purpose. They're ignoring why He richly supplied them in the first place.

¹ DeWalt, D. (1961). *Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus*. College Press. p. 126.

² In the classic translations of 1 Timothy 6:18, Timothy instructs the rich “to communicate.” King James Version; American Standard Version; English Revised Version; Literal Standard Version; New Heart English Bible; Webster's Bible Translation; Young's Literal Translation.

³ Nouwen, H. J. M. & Ball, N. (2019). *A spirituality of fundraising: Workbook edition*. Upper Room Books. p. 26.

⁴ Jiang, J., Zeng, T., Zhang, C., & Wang, R. (2018). The mediating role of relatedness need satisfaction in the relationship between charitable behavior and well-being: Empirical evidence from China. *International Journal of Psychology*, 53(5), 349-355. p. 349.

⁵ Greer, P. & Weekley, D. (2015). *The giver and the gift: Principles of kingdom fundraising*. Bethany House. p. 95-96.

⁶ A donor-donor community is still a kind of reciprocal, mutual benefit society. However, the benefit here is to a personally meaningful project or cause, not necessarily to one's own wallet. If I'm in a donor-donor community, the other person's gift benefits me in the sense that it advances a cause that is important in my life.

⁷ Tumolo, J. (2017). *Go see people: Grow your fundraising program*. SkillBites LLC.

⁸ Describing *koinōnikous* in our passage, one commentator writes, “An appearance of tautology is avoided by taking it, with Chrysostom, in the sense of *neighbourliness*, borne out by sundry Plutarchean passages (e.g. Mor. 703, 757) and the use of the term in Marcus Aurelius.” [Simpson, E. K. (1954). *The Pastoral Epistles: The Greek text with introduction and commentary*. Eerdmans.]

⁹ Wagoner, R. L., & Besikof, R. J. (2010). Community college fundraising: The voluntary support of education survey as a sampling tool for research. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 35(1-2), 74-87.

¹⁰ Flahaven, B., & Glover, T. (2010). *Community college foundations: An analysis of a survey conducted by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education*. CASE White Paper. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 12.

¹¹ Toupin, M. (2015). Characteristics of major donors for Bible translation. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 9(1), 41-55. p. 41.

¹² Wagner, L., Reyes, A., & Toupin, M. (2015, October 18). Responses to characteristics of major donors for Bible translation—part 2. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*. 9(2). <https://jacl.andrews.edu/responses-characteristics-of-major-donors-for-bible-translation-part-2/>

¹³ Ostrower, F. (1995). *Why the wealthy give: The culture of elite philanthropy*. Princeton University Press. p. 31.

¹⁴ “A kind heart as well as a generous hand is demanded of the rich.” [Gaebelein, F. (1984). *The expositor's Bible commentary: 1, 2 Thessalonians; 1, 2 Timothy; Titus*. Eerdmans. p. 282.]

Chapter 14

Message 12: You're being a good partner in a great partnership!

- *Biblical fundraising offers beneficial reciprocity with God and the fellowship community.*
- *Ordinary fundraising asks for a disconnected one-way transfer to outsiders.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on **God, who richly supplies us** with all things for enjoyment: **to do good**, to be rich in good works, to be generous and **ready to share, storing up for themselves** the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so **that they may take hold** of that which is truly life."

The almsgiving ask

Almsgiving is an isolated, one-way, vertical transfer. Almsgiving pairs with begging. Begging asks based only on the receiver's need. It offers no benefit to the giver. In modern fundraising, the almsgiving ask might sound like this:

- "You should give money because others need it."
- "You should give money because our good work shows that we deserve it."
- "You should give money because you can."
- "You should give money because you're supposed to."

Notice what all these messages have in common. There's no donor benefit. There's no mutual sharing relationship. The donor becomes part of no community. There's no reciprocity. There's no reciprocal altruism.

These messages aren't wrong. But they are different. They're for a different kind of gift. They can work for the "obligation" gift. They can work for the "pat on the head" gift. They can work for the "isn't that nice for you people" gift. They can work for the pocket change gift from disposable income. They do not work for the major life investment gift from wealth.

Charities can get good at delivering these "small gift" messages. They can spur simple altruism. They can inspire almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. They can even get good at begging, which naturally pairs with almsgiving.¹

But often, those same charities fail at major gift fundraising. They fail to inspire large gifts of wealth. They're not doing something wrong. They're doing something different.

It's an offer, not an ask

This passage is different. Yes, it encourages the donor to give. But this is not begging. It's not simply an "ask." Instead, it's an offer.

There is a difference. An offer promises benefit. An ask does not. An offer presents a "good deal." It benefits the one who says yes. An ask benefits only the receiver, not the giver.

This passage gives an impressive list of donor benefits. Some are from God. Some are from the fellowship community. Some are from the donation experience itself.

- They enjoy their wealth. ("for enjoyment")
- They make a real difference for good in a way that is personally meaningful to them. ("to do good")
- They obtain the status of one who brings great beauty into the world. ("to be rich in [beautiful] good works")

- They enjoy an internal and external identity as a good sharer. (“to be generous”)
- They fulfill the mutual social norm of sharing within a caring, concerned, and reciprocal fellowship community family. (“and ready to share”)
- They are freed to enjoy doing good today because God will be supplying more tomorrow. (“God, who richly supplies us”)
- They respond like a good partner to God’s rich provision in a way that imitates and pleases Him. (“God, who richly supplies us ... to do good”)
- They are “storing up for themselves the treasure” of future benefits.
- They make a lasting impact. (“a good foundation for the future”)
- They experience an enriched life both now and later. (“so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”)

Donors experience these benefits right now. They also experience them in the future. It all adds up to the best deal ever. This is a message of donor benefit. It’s a message of massive donor benefit. These are benefits of many kinds, in many ways, from many sources.

The goal is not just to make a compelling ask. It’s to make an attractive offer. Understanding this changes things. This goal is different. We actually want to provide value to the donor. We do everything we can to deliver this scriptural donor experience. The goal is not to have donors; it’s to have joyful donors. We work to provide a donation experience that is worth the gift.

When this becomes our goal, it makes us a valuable partner for the donor. We become a means or instrument for them to accomplish these scriptural goals. We deliver real value.

It's an offer of beneficial partnership

This passage encourages giving. It does so with many arguments. But each is part of the same framework. Each is about partnership reciprocity. Each says, give because

1. You're a good (reciprocating) partner.
2. You're in a great (beneficial) partnership.

This is a message about reciprocal partnership. It's a message about partnership values and partnership benefits. It's a different kind of fundraising message. It requires a different kind of fundraising behavior.

This is fundraising that cares about building beneficial partnerships. It's fundraising that cares about upholding partnership values. It's fundraising that cares about delivering partnership benefits.

Making this argument to give might feel easy. But this isn't just an ask. It's an offer. It's an offer of a beneficial partnership. A valid offer requires delivering the promised result. Offering a beneficial partnership means delivering partnership benefits. It means honoring partnership values. It means being a good partner.

Without reciprocity, there's no partnership

Some charities fail to offer beneficial partnerships. Many aren't even trying. For some, these goals don't even make

sense. They might call their donors “partners.” But their actual view of the donor “relationship” is this:

“They give us money. We use it. That’s the ‘partnership.’ Their job is to give. Our job is just to be our wonderful selves. If we keep reminding them how wonderful we are, they’re supposed to keep giving us their money.”

Does that sound like an attractive partnership? Would you want to be in a relationship with someone who felt this way about you? This isn’t an attractive offer. It’s not actually describing a partnership. A partnership without reciprocity is not really a partnership.

Yes, it’s important for charities to use money wisely. It’s important for them to be effective. But, for this ministry, it’s important as part of delivering the scriptural donor experience. It’s important as part of donors feeling that they have done good. It’s important as part of donors feeling that they are rich in good works.

Suppose a charity is doing great work. That’s fine. But that, by itself, doesn’t make a donor feel that he has done good. That, by itself, doesn’t make the donor feel rich in good works. The donor’s simple question is this:

- “I gave. What changed because of my gift?”

For many charities, the answer might be

- “We have no idea.”
- “There’s no way to measure that.”
- “Nothing.”
- “It’s complicated.”

- “That’s irrelevant. (The point is what we, as an organization, accomplish. It’s not about what your one gift accomplishes.)”

These answers may be logical. But they don’t work. They provide no reason to ever give again. They don’t make the donor feel that he has done good. They don’t make the donor feel that he is rich in good works. They don’t deliver the 1 Timothy 6:18 donor experience. They don’t deliver an experience the donor will want to repeat.

Of course, delivering this experience takes work. It requires a desire to benefit the donor. It’s the payback part of a reciprocal partnership.

This passage has a message that motivates giving. It motivates giving by appealing to partnership values and partnership benefits. Treating “partners” with no reciprocity violates these rules. Treating them with “transactional” reciprocity does too. These contradict the message. They contradict the appeal to partnership values and partnership benefits.

Fundraising without partnership benefits stays small

Are we offering donors a beneficial partnership? Are we even trying? This issue often divides small gift fundraising from big gift fundraising.

Small gift messages are often about simple altruism or almsgiving. They may focus on need or guilt. They may focus on the charity’s great work. But they don’t motivate with partnership values or benefits.

In these messages there is no donor benefit. There is no beneficial partnership. These are asks, not offers. This

approach keeps gifts small. It does so in two ways.

First, it can demotivate major gifts. If a gift doesn't do something specific, then a small one works just as well. If anything helps, then anything is enough. If I give from guilt, then giving is still painful. I'll stop it as soon as I can. These are small gift messages. They don't lead to major life investment gifts.

Second, it can demotivate major gift fundraising. Suppose a charity just wants the donor's money. They're not trying to offer anything in return. They're not trying to build beneficial partnerships. They're certainly not providing a ministry to the donors.

How, then, does the charity view fundraising? It views fundraising as a burden on donors. It views giving as something done "reluctantly or under compulsion."² It's unpleasant but, alas, necessary.

Consider the effect of these attitudes on fundraising. What effect might these have on asking "big" instead of asking "small"? What effect might they have on spending resources on fundraising?

If giving is a burden, the nicest thing we can do for donors is to reduce that burden. We can ask less. We can ask smaller. We can try to find alternative funding. We can ask only when we have no other options. We can ask as little as possible and as seldom as possible. This negative view of fundraising leads to weak results.

Now, let's flip the script. What if we were offering donors a great deal? What if we were offering them a donor experience that was worth their gift? What if they got to feel that they had done good? What if they got to feel rich in good

works? What if, by giving, they were able to join in a shared fellowship community? What if we were offering them the absolute best way to enjoy their wealth? What if we were ministering to them through fundraising?

What effect might this have on fundraising? How might it change asking “big” instead of asking “small”? How might it change spending resources on fundraising?

This is a different world. It’s not the world of begging. It’s not the world of simple altruism. It’s the world of the attractive offer. It’s the world of the beneficial partnership. It’s the scriptural ministry of major gift fundraising.

Partnership values

The passage shows that the rich person is being a good partner. He is fulfilling partnership values. This means

1. Not being disconnected from or ignoring your partners

He is not “high-minded” or separated from the community. He has set his hope in God.

2. Not being self-focused

He is not conceited. He has not set his hope on his riches but on God.

3. Not feeling self-sufficient so that you don’t need anyone else

Again, he is not “high-minded” or separated from the community. He has not set his hope on his riches but on God.

4. Not being ungrateful

He recognizes that it all comes from God. God richly supplies us with all things.

5. Not violating a partner's trust

He is not violating God's trust placed in him by richly providing wealth. He is not violating the fellowship community's social norm of generously sharing from whatever God has richly supplied to them.

6. Showing care for your partner

He is a generous sharer within the fellowship community.

7. Showing care for what your partner wants

He is using wealth in the way that God would want.

Violating partnership values

Why do charities fail at major gift fundraising? Often, it's because they violate these same partnership values. Such a partnership is not attractive to donors. It rarely lasts.

In the real world, this looks different from different perspectives. Charity administrators may see it one way. Donors see it another. Let's consider both views:

1. Being disconnected from or ignoring your partner

Donor: "I gave but no one has called, written, or visited."

Administrator: "The donor's job is to provide resources for our ministry. Our job is to use that money wisely to accomplish our goals. Spending time on communications that don't ask for money isn't our job. It's inefficient."

2. Being self-focused

Donor: “They talk about how great they are, but I’m not sure how my gift changed anything.”

Administrator: “We’re the best in the world at this mission. I think that’s why donors give. They see our track record. They see our vision. They fund our vision. What one gift does is irrelevant. What we accomplish as an organization is the only thing that matters.”

3. Feeling self-sufficient so that you don’t need anyone else

Donor: “They’ve already decided what they’re doing. They’re certainly not interested in my input.”

Administrator: “We are the experts. We know the best way to do this work. If we do good work, the money will come. People will give because they’ll see what we’ve accomplished.”

4. Being ungrateful

Donor: “I gave. I got a receipt. That was the end of it.”

Administrator: “Donors give because we’ve earned their gifts through our excellent work. No one deserves their support more than we do. We use their money efficiently. We don’t waste it on donor ‘experiences’ or ‘relationship building.’”

5. Violating a partner’s trust

Donor: “They said they were going to do this with the money, but that’s not what happened.”

Administrator: “We’re making the decisions, not the donor. We’re the experts. We do what’s best for accomplishing this mission.”

Donor: “Their appeal letters call us ‘friends.’ But when we wanted to visit, they acted as if it was such a burden. And then they charged us \$20 for parking!”

Administrator: “The donor’s job is to fund the ministry. Donors who want to take up extra time or get special treatment are giving for the wrong reasons. They can pay for those things if they want them.”

6. Not showing care for your partner

Donor: “I only hear from them when they want money.”

Administrator: “It’s simple. Their role is to give money. Our role is to use that money to do our work. Our ministry is not with the donors. We just want their money.”

7. Not showing care for what your partner wants

Donor: “I would like to make a gift with a lasting impact. Maybe a permanent scholarship for _____. Maybe endowing the salary of a worker dedicated to _____. Maybe funding a building project for _____.”

Administrator: “We don’t allow gift restrictions. We’re the ones who create the plans. We’re the experts here, not the donors. Just because people write checks doesn’t mean they get to decide. We’re in control, not them.”

These administrator perspectives are a problem. The problem is not that the arguments are wrong. The problem is that they don’t work. They don’t work for major gift fundraising. They violate partnership values. They conflict with the offer of a beneficial partnership.

Partnership reciprocity: Do you want to?

The ministry of major gift fundraising is powerful. The offer of a beneficial partnership is attractive. Charities can make such an offer. But often, they won't. The barrier is not external. It's internal. The biggest hurdle is answering, "Do you want to?" In other words,

- Do you want to deliver a donor experience that is truly the best way for them to enjoy their wealth?
- Do you want to deliver a donor experience that makes them feel that they have done good?
- Do you want to deliver a donor experience that makes them feel that they have become rich in good works?
- Do you want to deliver a donor experience that strongly connects them with a mutually reciprocal fellowship community?
- Do you want to come alongside this group to deliver this scripturally authorized ministry?

If the answer is yes, the rest will follow. The remaining challenges are merely tactical. Once the destination is set, the path becomes clear.

Partnership reciprocity: Yes, you can!

Suppose you say yes. You want to deliver this ministry. You want to deliver this donor experience. You want their experience to match this passage. But maybe you feel like you can't. Maybe you feel that your situation is different. You might object,

"This doesn't apply to me. I'm not raising money for the local church. I'm raising money for the homeless. (Or maybe it's international missions.) My donors aren't

part of the recipient community. I can't ask them to 'share.' I can only ask them to 'give away.'”

Now what? Can you still ask donors to “share” instead of “give away”? Yes.

Suppose a donor gives to relieve homelessness in their community. Do they benefit from living in a community without homelessness? Yes. That makes it a nicer place to live. So, is the donor also part of the recipient community? Yes. Can the donor share together within a fellowship community of other donors? Yes. Together, they share. Together, they benefit from the improved community. This is a beneficial partnership.

But maybe the money isn't staying local. Maybe it's going to another country. Certainly, that eliminates sharing, right? Not necessarily.

In 2 Corinthians 8:13-14, Paul details the idea of sharing (i.e., reciprocal altruism). He contrasts it with simple giving (i.e., altruism).³ He does so as part of a fundraising appeal letter. It was an appeal to send money to another country. And yet, it was still a message about sharing. It was still a message of donor benefit. You are helping them today. They could help you tomorrow. Or, as Paul describes it,

“Right now you have plenty and can help those who are in need. Later, they will have plenty and can share with you when you need it. In this way, things will be equal.” (2 Corinthians 8:14 NLT).

Can we be part of the beneficiary community for international missions? Yes. Today, they need someone to share the gospel message. So, we send missionaries to their land. Perhaps tomorrow, we will be in need. If the gospel

message flourishes in their land, they may return the favor. They may send missionaries to us. Or if we become exiles, we may have a foreign place of refuge. Today, we benefit the foreign fellowship community. Tomorrow, our fellowship community may benefit from them.

Those donor benefits would be available in the future. Other donor benefits start right away. The recipients can be good (reciprocal) partners. In Paul's example, they will offer "prayer on your behalf." These are not transactional partners; they're family partners. Thus, they will "yearn for you."⁴

These are good partners. They do not ignore the gift or the giver. Instead, they respond with gratitude. This is not just gratitude for the gift. This is gratitude for the donor. It's gratitude for who the donor is being. They will "yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you."⁵ They will "glorify God for your obedience to your confession."⁶

The point is this. Whatever our cause, we can find a way to deliver these results. We can deliver a donor experience that matches this passage.

The destination guides the journey

Knowing where we want to go helps. It guides us to the right paths. Our goal includes a specific donor experience. This passage describes it. Understanding this goal answers many questions.

Consider this example. Should we host that next donor event? The answer is, "It depends." Will it help us accomplish our scriptural goals? For example:

- Will we use it to "come alongside" high-capacity donors? Will it lead to instructing them to share generously? Will it lead to an offer to do so?

- Will it help donors to feel that they have done good?
- Will it help donors to feel that they are rich in good works?
- Will it help donors connect with others who also generously share what God has blessed them with?
- Will it help donors feel part of a beneficial fellowship community?

If these answers are yes, then the event fits. Otherwise, it doesn't. The destination guides the journey.

Knowing the destination also gives guidance for other issues. For example, should donors pay for their tickets? A CFO might like that transactional result. It creates a small financial win. But does it move towards our destination? Does it match with a beneficial social partnership? Does it promote sharing within a family relationship?

Suppose we invite a friend to a New Year's Eve party at our house. That says something positive about the relationship. Now, suppose we tell him there's a \$50 cover charge at the door. That says something quite different about the relationship!

Would we say this to a friend? No. Would we do this with a family member? Of course not! Should we do this with a major gift donor? The answer may be the same. This doesn't mean a paid event is a bad idea. It may just match a different kind of relationship.

The point is this. Once we answer yes to these goals, everything else follows naturally. The right and wrong moves become obvious.

It's your choice

This passage describes a donor experience. It describes beneficial partnerships. A charity – any charity – can choose to make that offer. It can choose to be part of a beneficial partnership. It can offer reciprocal altruism. But it all starts by answering, “Do you want to?” For example,

- Do you want to deliver this donor experience?
- Do you want to be a good (beneficial) partner with your donors?
- Do you want to uphold partnership values?
- Do you want to provide partnership benefits?

For many charities, the answer is “No.” They’re content to stick with the small gift message. They prefer to focus only on their needs. Or the donor’s obligations. Or how wonderful their charity is.

But a charity – any charity – can decide to answer “Yes!” It can focus on offering beneficial partnerships. It can provide a donor experience that is worth the gift. It can make the donors feel that they are doing good. It can make them feel that they are becoming rich in good works. It can build a mutually beneficial community of fellow donors. It can deliver this ministry of major gift fundraising.

¹ *E.g.*, Acts 3:2, “And a man who had been unable to walk from birth was being carried, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order for him to beg for charitable gifts [eleēmosynē] from those entering the temple grounds.”

² This directly contradicts Paul’s fundraising, which has a very different goal. 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Each one must do just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

³ “For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship,” (2 Corinthians 8:13a). In other words, this is not simple altruism. Instead, it’s reciprocal altruism. He continues, “but by way of equality— at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so that their abundance also may serve as assistance for your need, so that there may be equality” (2 Corinthians 8:13b-14). This is not giving as almsgiving [*eleēmosynē*]. Instead, he references “the liberality of your contribution [*koinōnias*] to them and to all.” (2 Corinthians 9:13).

⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:14b

⁵ 2 Corinthians 9:14b

⁶ 2 Corinthians 9:13b

Chapter 15

Message 13: You're making an investment with real permanence!

- *Biblical fundraising emphasizes lasting investment results.*
- *Ordinary fundraising just needs cash now.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, **storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future**, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

Paul's endowment language

The donor's giving has a result. The result is "storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future" (1 Timothy 6:18a).

A deeper dive into the words reveals this idea:

The donor's giving results in [*apo-*] a heap or store of accumulated riches [*thēsaurizontas*] used for a financial fund [*themelion*] that does good [*kalon*]. This good is publicly visible. It's also personal; it reflects the giver's good internal character. The fund attaches to and promotes [*heautois*] the donor. It is lasting. The fund is for the purpose of [*eis*] the future [*to mellon*].

Here, Paul is using endowment language.¹ He's using the language of the charitable foundation. This isn't accidental. He was writing to Timothy in Ephesus. This was a major banking center. Many charitable endowments were held and managed there. They were even etched into the architecture.

The recognition of such endowments would have surrounded those in Timothy's congregation. At that time, endowments and foundations were highly popular. This was how rich people gave.

An answered question

This passage is about motivating wealth sharing by the wealth holders. This isn't just about giving. It's about giving big. Really big.

So, what's the secret? What leads to these really big gifts? What elicits charitable wealth sharing by the wealthy? This isn't a secret. It's an answered question. It's a solved puzzle.

We know the answer. And the answer is this. Major gifts of wealth are motivated by the features of endowments. (This includes foundations, which are stand-alone endowments.) These elements motivate large charitable transfers of wealth.

Consider the statistics. For estates over \$5 million, only 22% of charitable bequest dollars went to public charities.² Everything else went to private family foundations.

In lifetime giving, the results are similar. Two-thirds of the largest gifts to education funded endowments.³ A British study looked at all donations over £1 Million. Over two-thirds went to universities that hold large endowments or foundations that are large endowments.⁴ In a typical year in the US, nine of the ten largest charitable gifts in the country went to such entities.⁵

This is what the largest gifts look like. We might love endowments and foundations. We might hate them. We can

argue about that. But what we can't dispute is that they work. They work to motivate wealth sharing by wealth holders.

In fact, this is the whole reason the law allows them. One law professor writes,

“Laws enforce perpetual funds for charity because to do otherwise would discourage gifts.”⁶

The law doesn't allow perpetual funds because they're always the best use of charitable dollars. It allows them because the permanence attracts the donations in the first place.

Endowments motivate wealth sharing by wealth holders. This matters. It matters even if we don't offer endowment structures. It matters even if we simply use endowment language. Either way, these concepts are still important. They're important because they reveal motivation.

What motivates massive gifts of wealth? It's not a mystery. Empirically, it's an answered question. We know the answer with certainty. Wealth sharing by the wealthy is motivated by the features of charitable foundations and endowments.

Permanence, control, and identity

The features of the charitable endowment (or foundation) motivate massive gifts of wealth. What are these features?

1. Donor identity

The funds are named for the donor or the donor's family. The good work is attached to their name. It reflects the donor's personal values. It must follow the donor's directives.

2. Donor control

The gift comes with instructions. The donor writes the rules. These legally control how the gift can be used.

3. Permanence

The gift is not spent immediately. The fund is lasting, usually permanent.⁷

Permanence, donor control, and donor identity motivate major gifts of wealth. Endowments and foundations offer these elements. So does 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

1. Donor identity

The donor shares because they're already in the ongoing process of being not high-minded. They're not above or separated from the fellowship community. (Social identity). They have, already in the past, decided to not "set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God". (Life history identity). Their good works openly demonstrate their underlying honorable identity. (Public and private identity.) Their "I am" statement is that of a good sharer of abundance. It's that of a connected sharer with the fellowship community. This is who they are.

2. Donor control

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, the donor has agency. The donor is the main character. The donor does the good works. The donor stores up treasure for the future. The donor violently grabs hold of the life that is really life. The donor is in control.

3. Permanence

The donors are in a reciprocal relationship with an eternal, richly providing God. They are sharing with a lasting fellowship community. They are storing up for

themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future. Their wealth holding is temporary, but their charitable impact is lasting.

Paul's message offers permanence, control, and identity. It offers endowment features. It uses endowment language. It emphasizes the elements that effectively motivate major gifts of wealth.

Paul's permanent endowment words still apply

We know what features motivate large gifts of wealth. These are the features of the endowment. So, what do we do with that knowledge? Of course, we might offer these structures. We can offer endowments. Or we can offer some endowment-like features. But we don't have to. We can simply describe the donor's impact using endowment language.

Of course, endowments do match Paul's language. Their features are highly effective. They motivate wealth sharing by wealthy donors. This was true in ancient times. The historical record shows it. It's still true today. The modern data shows it, too.

Understanding this reveals the psychology of what motivates massive gifts. It can shape our communication. Regardless of legal structures, we can still use Paul's fundraising words. Donors can experience permanent, lasting outcomes. This is true whether the gift is spent immediately or over time.

Either way, the impact and memory of the donor's good works continue. The donor's identity as a good sharer remains. The donor's strengthened connection to the fellowship community endures. And, of course, any heavenly

consequences are eternal. These all remain even if some financial disaster erases all their other wealth.

Professor Ronald Ward explains it this way:

“By their repeated *good deeds* the rich will still be *rich*. When the deeds are done they are not lost. The rich still ‘have’ them if they are *rich in good deeds*.”⁸

Paul explains it this way:

“As the scriptures say, ‘They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.’” (2 Corinthians 9:9 NLT).

One commentator notes of this verse,

“the thought could be that the righteous man’s goodness will always be remembered, by humankind or by God, or that its effects will influence generation after generation.”⁹

This is like an athlete who wins a championship. Of course, he will lose that peak athletic ability. He’ll lose it gradually with age or immediately by injury. But the victory itself can never be taken away. It’s a permanent status. The Super Bowl champion wears the championship ring, even in his retirement.

In the same way, the rich can win a victory. They can make an enduring impact. They can do something meaningful with their wealth. They can grab a lasting identity. They can experience a lifetime of a good reputation. They can even leave behind this good family reputation for their descendants.

They have this great opportunity, but only right now. Ultimately, they will lose it. They’ll lose the capacity to make a meaningful impact with their wealth. They’ll lose the capacity to enjoy that impact. They’ll lose this at death or in financial

misfortune. Only right now, at this opportune moment, can they choose to do something permanent. Only right now can they make a lasting difference.

If they do so, the results are permanent. No matter what happens, they'll always have their completed good works. They'll have an accumulation of them. They will have followed Paul's instruction

“to hoard a wealth of noble actions by doing good” (1 Timothy 6:18b NEB).¹⁰

Permanence is more enjoyable

The enjoyment from consuming something fades instantly. Any enjoyment from buying something does too. We quickly get used to it. Then, we have to maintain it. We have to repair it. We have to protect it. We have to insure it. The enjoyment quickly fades, but all the administrative hassle remains.

The enjoyment from doing good is different. It lasts. It accumulates. The enjoyment from making an impact isn't limited to the moment of impact. Later, we can look back on it with renewed enjoyment. As eternal beings, most of our enjoyment may come retrospectively.

Bingeing with our wealth creates no such retrospective enjoyment. Instead, it leads to regret. Burying wealth just to die with it does too. As eternal beings that regret can last a long time.

When teaching behavioral finance to college students, I like to put it this way. Don't spend your money on what you want to do. Spend your money on what you want to have done. What do I feel like doing? Maybe just bingeing on Cheetos and

Netflix. But do I want to have done that? No. That's not something I can re-live with pride and accomplishment.

In the same way, when we look back on our lives, what will we want to have done with our wealth? Just buried it and died with it? No. That's dumb. Binged with it? No. That's dumber.

Instead, we gain enjoyment from having accumulated a wealth of noble deeds. That's enjoyable. It's enjoyable when it happens. It's also enjoyable when we think back on it later.

Permanence motivates major donors

Permanence motivates large, once-in-a-lifetime gifts. We see it in the statistics. We can also see it in the donors' own words.

At the establishment of his foundation, Andrew Carnegie wrote,

“My chief happiness as I write these lines lies in the thought that even after I pass away the wealth that came to me to administer as a sacred trust for the good of my fellow men is to continue to benefit humanity for generations untold.”¹¹

One fundraiser explains it this way:

“We all are looking for meaning in our lives. We want to be part of something that is bigger than we are, something that will live on beyond our small human lives. Giving is a chance to experience joy and connection, to join in work that is powerful, positive, and enduring.”¹²

William James wrote,

“The greatest use of a life is to spend it on something that will outlast it.”¹³

The stability of a charity may not be relevant for small, immediate gifts. But it does matter for large lifetime gifts. One major donor explains,

“Giving the major gift fills you with joy and passion and connects you to the organization for a lifetime.”¹⁴

This lifetime connection may be one reason donors give large gifts to strong, stable charities.¹⁵ Studies using financial data from thousands of charities confirm this. One reports that fundraising success is predicted by a charity’s,

“Ability to continue to operate and provide charitable services in the event of changed economic circumstances.”¹⁶

Another study concludes,

“Donors want to know whether the organization can continue to operate in the future.”¹⁷

Big gifts don’t go to needy organizations. They go to permanent ones. For example, there are over 6,000 colleges and universities in the US. Yet, over a quarter of all charitable bequest dollars to education go to just 35 of them. Which ones are these? The wealthiest, oldest, and most stable ones.¹⁸

Mortality reminders increase permanence desire

In 1 Timothy 6:19, donors get a benefit “for themselves.” It’s a lasting benefit “for the future.” Paul offers a permanent outcome for donors. But first, he draws a contrast. The other options are temporary and disappearing.

Wealth holding is temporary. It's uncertain. It can disappear. (1 Timothy 6:17). In fact, it will definitely disappear. It will disappear because we will disappear. We're going to die. And we can't take it with us. (1 Timothy 6:7).

Such death reminders increase attraction to permanence. We see this in experiments. In one experiment, people could donate to a poverty relief charity.¹⁹ Normally, people donated twice as much if the charity was described as

“Meeting the *immediate* needs of people”

than if it was described as

“Creating *lasting* improvements that would benefit people in the future.”

But if people were first reminded of their own mortality, things changed. The results reversed. Death-reminded people donated three times more with the permanence language. Death reminders made permanence language more attractive.

Another experiment on death-reminded giving showed the same idea. It looked at memorial gifts honoring a deceased loved one.²⁰ Several options were tested to prompt a second memorial gift from donors. The one that worked best was permanence. If hitting a goal would create a permanent fund, giving increased dramatically.

Another study also explored why donors made memorial gifts. It explained,

“The answer to this question relates to permanence: donors who engage in in-memoriam giving want their deceased loved one's name attached to the donation in order to preserve their memory forever.”²¹

A different kind of death-reminded gift is the estate gift. These reflect the same desire for permanence. In one study, people with a preference were three times more likely to want a permanent fund for bequest gifts than for current gifts.²²

Each experiment shows the same idea. Death reminders make permanence more attractive.²³ Paul's death reminders followed by permanence language works.

Convert disappearing wealth into something permanent

Permanence is attractive. It's attractive for those once-in-a-lifetime, legacy-defining gifts. It's attractive for major gifts of wealth. It's especially attractive when facing our own mortality.

Paul ramps up this attraction by ramping up mortality reminders. He emphasizes the instability of wealth hoarding. Then, he offers the permanence of wealth sharing.

By providing this contrast, Paul makes an argument for wealth diversification. Donors are not becoming less rich. They're becoming rich in a new category. They're becoming rich in a new, permanent way.

Imagine having a first meeting with your new wealth manager. He begins by asking,

“So, tell me: How would you prefer to lose your wealth?”

That sounds strange. But it is the truth. We will lose our worldly wealth. We can't take it with us when we die. The only question is how.

“How do you want to lose your wealth?”

Not deciding is deciding. Attempting to hold it means it will be lost either to death or to financial misfortune. That loss is certain. It's unavoidable.

Or imagine starting a conversation this way,

“I want to help you get more personal benefit from your money. So, tell me, how would you like your money to be benefitting you personally 100 years from now?”

The first response might be simply,

“It can't. I'll be dead.”

This brings to mind Paul's opening point. We can't take it with us when we die. That's a powerful place to start. It elicits a recognition that ownership is temporary. Wealth holding is disappearing. We can then discuss other, more permanent, futures. For example,

“You're right. You won't be here on this earth. But when you look back 100 years from now, what kind of an impact would you most enjoy having made? Are there any causes that have been important in your life? Is there any cause where you would like to have made a lasting impact?”

When we have wealth conversations, we want to have conversations about the future. What are the future plans for the asset? Is the plan to sell it? That's a great time to encourage a gift. People are more generous with windfall gains.

Is the plan to die with it? Is the family really in need, or will this just be a surplus for them, too? Is there enough for your charitable goals in the estate plan, as well? Could you maybe even accomplish some of those while you're still alive to enjoy it?

Focusing on the future highlights that they can't hold the wealth forever. They are going to lose it. That's guaranteed. The only question is how.

Both Jesus and Paul provide a better alternative. Why not convert some into a permanent form? Why not diversify? Yes, you're rich. That's great. But it's temporary. Why not be rich in even more ways? Why not be rich permanently? Why not be rich in new categories? Why not be rich in good works? Why not be rich in identity and reputation? Why not build up for yourself a good foundation for the future?

Jesus says use wealth to "buy friends." These are not just any friends. These friends "will receive you into the eternal dwellings." (Luke 16:9). Paul says use wealth to *koinōnikous*. (1 Timothy 6:18). Use it to connect with the fellowship community.

There is nothing wrong with having wealth. But it's disappearing. Having wealth is like being rich in Confederate dollars during the Civil War. It will buy stuff, but only temporarily. It will soon be worthless to you.

Wealth holders are in the same position as the shrewd manager in Luke 16:1-9. They control wealth, but not for long. They will soon lose that control. So, what ought they to do with it? Be shrewd. Convert it into something that will last when the wealth disappears. Diversify into an investment with real permanence!

Today. Tomorrow. Forever.

Donors can make an impact at different times. We can emphasize this through use of language. We can also offer it

through giving structures. They can make an impact

- Today: through an annual fund gift
- Tomorrow: through a multi-year pledge
- Forever: through an endowment gift ²⁴

Sometimes donors want an immediate impact. Sometimes they want a longer-lasting impact. Sometimes, especially after a death reminder, they want a permanent impact. This three-part menu connects with each time preference. Paul's list of donor benefits does the same thing.

Paul emphasizes permanent outcomes. But this is just one of the donor benefits. Their giving makes an impact today, tomorrow, and forever:

- The first result is immediate. It's an immediate impact. The donors do good. They do work that accomplishes something.
- The next result takes longer. The donors accumulate a large collection of beautifully good works. They become rich in these good works.
- Over time, their giving establishes an identity. They become good sharers with the fellowship community.
- The final result is permanent. The donors get a good foundation for the future. They get to take hold of that which is truly life.

The donors' giving makes an impact today, tomorrow, and forever. The impact is immediate. It's today. But it's not only today. The impact is also ongoing and building. It's tomorrow. But it's not only tomorrow. The impact is also enduring. It's forever. This appeals to every time frame. It

delivers the ideal donor experience today, tomorrow, and forever.

¹ For details, see “Paul’s charitable endowment language,” Chapter 15-I in *The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising*.

² Among decedents in 2004 and 2007 with estates of more than \$5 million, the share of charitable dollars going to private foundations was 70% and 78%, respectively. [Raub, B. G. (2008, Spring). Federal estate tax returns filed for 2004 decedents, *Statistics of Income Bulletin*, 27(115), 125-28. p. 136; Raub, B. G. & Newcomb, J. (2011, Summer). Federal estate tax returns filed for 2007 decedents, *Statistics of Income Bulletin*, 31(182), 188-91. p. 191. See discussion in James III, R. N. (2020). American charitable bequest transfers across the centuries: Empirical findings and implications for policy and practice. *Estate Planning & Community Property Law Journal*, 12, 235-285.] Note that exemption amounts in subsequent years more than doubled, thus preventing observation of estates at these lower wealth levels.

³ Giacomini, C., Trumble, D., Koranteng, A. & King, J. (2022). *CASE study of principal gifts to U.S. colleges & universities*. Council for Advancement and Support of Education. p. 7.

⁴ See, e.g., Coutts and Co. (2015). *Coutts million pound donors report*. <http://philanthropy.coutts.com/en/reports/2015/united-states/findings.html> and <http://philanthropy.coutts.com/en/reports/2015/united-kingdom/findings.html>

⁵ Yakowicz, W. (2019, Dec. 29). The biggest philanthropic gifts of 2019. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/willyakowicz/2020/12/29/the-top-10-philanthropic-gifts-of-2019>

⁶ Brody, E. (1997). Charitable endowments and the democratization of dynasty. *Arizona Law Review*, 39, 873-948. p. 942-43.

⁷ For example, one congressional investigation of charitable foundations in the 1950s found only one with an actual date of termination. The rest were required or allowed to be permanent. [Weaver, W. (1967). *U.S. philanthropy foundations*. Harper & Row. p. 96. Cited in Madoff, R., & Soskis, B. (Eds.), (2023). *Giving in time: Temporal considerations in philanthropy*. Rowman & Littlefield.]

⁸ Ward, R. A. (1974). *Commentary on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. Word Books. p. 123.

⁹ Thrall, M. E. (2000). *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. T & T Clark. p. 582.

¹⁰ New English Bible (1961)

¹¹ Savage, H. J. (1953). *Fruit of an impulse: Forty-five years of the Carnegie Foundation, 1905-1950*. Harcourt, Brace and Co. p. 27.

¹² Perry, G. (2007). *Fired-up fundraising: Turning board passion into action*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 66.

¹³ Quoted in Dunn, L., White, K., & Dahl, D. W. (2020). A little piece of me: When mortality reminders lead to giving to others. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 47(3), 431-453. (No original source referenced.)

¹⁴ Fredricks, L. (2001). *Developing major gifts: Turning small donors into big contributors*. Aspen Publishers, Inc. p. 10.

¹⁵ Trussel, J. M., & Parsons, L. M. (2007). Financial reporting factors affecting donations to charitable organizations. *Advances in Accounting*, 23, 263-285;

Parsons, L. M., & Trussel, J. M. (2008). Fundamental analysis of not-for-profit financial statements: An examination of financial vulnerability measures. *Research in Government and Nonprofit Accounting*, 12, 35-56.

¹⁶ [Parsons, L. M., & Trussel, J. M. (2008). Fundamental analysis of not-for-profit financial statements: An examination of financial vulnerability measures. *Research in Government and Nonprofit Accounting*, 12, 35-56. p. 35.] Also see, "Our results suggest that contributions are positively associated with a charitable organization's ability to continue to operate" (p. 52).

¹⁷ Trussel, J. M., & Parsons, L. M. (2007). Financial reporting factors affecting donations to charitable organizations. *Advances in Accounting*, 23, 263-285. p. 268.

¹⁸ Fleischer, M. P. (2007). Charitable contributions in an ideal estate tax. *Tax Law Review*, 60, 263-321. p. 303.

¹⁹ Wade-Benzoni, K. A., Tost, L. P., Hernandez, M., & Larrick, R. P. (2012). It's only a matter of time: Death, legacies, and intergenerational decisions. *Psychological Science*, 23(7), 704-709.

²⁰ James, R. N. (2019). Encouraging repeated memorial donations to a scholarship fund: An experimental test of permanence goals and anniversary acknowledgements. *Philanthropy & Education*, 2(2), 1-28.

²¹ Penner, S., & Main, K. (2021). In memoriam fundraising: An empirical exploration of donor motivations. *Social Business*, 11(1-2), 117-136. p. 6.

²² Unpublished results from the study in James, R. N., III. (2015). The family tribute in charitable bequest giving: An experimental test of the effect of reminders on giving intentions. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 26(1), 73-89.

²³ Indeed, mortality reminders ramp up the desire for all the elements of endowment: Permanence, donor identity, and donor control. One charitable giving experiment showed this effect for donor identity. Mortality salience increased the desire to give, but only when the gift included an element of self-identification. Participants brought a book to the experiment. They then had an opportunity to donate it to a local book drive for those in need. For those who were first asked to sign and inscribe the book with a personal note, mortality salience increased the desire to donate it. Without this instruction to sign and inscribe the book, mortality salience had no effect. Thus, mortality salience increased the desire to give something that reflected one's identity but not to simply make a gift. [Dunn, L., White, K., & Dahl, D. W. (2020). A little piece of me: When mortality reminders lead to giving to others. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 47(3), 431-453.]

²⁴ Modified from Rocchio, D. (2024, March 7). *Oh, the places we will go: Behavioral economics, KPIs, and storytelling in stewardship*. [Presentation]. Episcopal Parish Network, Houston, TX.

Chapter 16

Message 14: You're grabbing the best life experience!

- *Biblical fundraising offers ultimate value to the donor: the best life experience.*
- *Ordinary fundraising delivers value only to the charity.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, **so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.**"

PART I

HOW PAUL TEACHES, OFFERS, AND DELIVERS THE IDEAL DONOR EXPERIENCE

The ideal donor experience delivers real life, right now

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, sharing God's rich supply has a purpose. That purpose is real life. That real life starts right now. Can sharing actually deliver real life, right now? That seems like a tall order. It's fine to promise some heavenly benefit – but right now is different. It's tangible. It's immediate.

It's also true. Paul's fundraising really delivers. The donors actually experience real life, right now. How so?

1. They express care and concern for others.
2. They respond to the mutual social norm of sharing.

3. They respond to God's rich provision in a way that pleases Him.
4. They are freed to enjoy doing good today because God will be supplying more tomorrow.
5. They make a real difference for good.
6. They bring great beauty into the world.
7. They have an identity as a good sharer.
8. They connect with an emotionally bonded, reciprocal fellowship community family.
9. They store up future benefits for themselves.
10. They use their wealth for enjoyment.

Now consider the opposite. What about those who experience none of these things in their lives? What kind of life is it? It's a life where:

1. They don't care about others.
2. They never respond to other people's sharing.
3. They never respond to God's blessings.
4. They are too afraid to ever use what they have.
5. They make no impact.
6. They bring no beauty into the world.
7. They neither view themselves nor are viewed by others as being good helpers or sharers.
8. They never connect with a shared community.
9. They never store up future benefits for themselves.
10. They experience no enjoyment from their wealth – only loss during life or at death.

And for these people, it gets even worse. Instead of enjoyment, they will actively suffer. (1 Timothy 6:9). They will pierce themselves with many griefs just to hoard up more. (1 Timothy 6:10). Everything they hoard up, they will lose. They will lose it to misfortune during life, or they will lose it at death. Their loss is guaranteed.

Or they will use their wealth to serve destructive appetites. They will binge. That might seem attractive, but the resulting life experience is not. It's not real life. It's anti-life. It creates a sad, hollow life. It's living while feeling dead inside. As Paul explained a few lines earlier of the bingeing rich widow,

“But she who lives in self-indulgence is dead even while she lives.” (1 Timothy 5:6).¹

So too, in Jesus's parable, the repentant son who had

“squandered his estate in wild living ... was dead and has come to life again ... was dead and has begun to live” (Luke 15:13b, 24b, 32b).

Solomon reports the results of his bingeing by writing,

“So, I hated life.” (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

One path delivers lasting enjoyment, impact, and reciprocal love. The others lead to suffering, emptiness, and loss. That's a massive difference. It's the difference between merely existing and experiencing life that is really life.

This isn't just a “someday” result. It's not just a heavenly result. It's a right now result. It's real life, right now.

This result isn't just theoretical. It's tangible. It's observable. One author interviewed more than 50 “mega”

donors. These people had made massive gifts of wealth. He observes,

“Mega givers are filled with joy. You can pick them out in a crowd. I haven’t been able to figure out why, but it’s true – there’s a sparkle and recognizable joy to their living - a *joie de vivre*.”²

These are real-life outcomes. These are real-life experiences. They’re not just hypothetical. They’re not just eschatological. This is real life, right now.

Paul describes, offers, and delivers the ideal donor experience

Paul describes the ideal donor experience. It’s the best deal ever. As fundraisers, it’s exciting to offer that deal. It’s motivational to describe those results.

But what about actually delivering that donor experience? Well, that’s not our department, right? That’s all up to God, right? Actually, no. The fundraising model from scripture doesn’t just describe these experiences. It helps to deliver them.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 instructs. These are Paul’s fundraising instructions. It directs rich Christians to pursue this ideal donor experience. It says, “You should do these wonderful things.”

2 Corinthians 8 & 9 offers. This is Paul’s fundraising appeal letter. It offers this ideal donor experience. It says, “Here’s a chance for you to do these wonderful things!”

Philippians 1 & 4 delivers and confirms. This is Paul’s gift acknowledgment letter.³ It helps to deliver and confirm

this ideal donor experience. It says, “You did these wonderful things!”

Paul provides models for each step of the fundraising process:

- He instructs. (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
- He offers. (2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
- He delivers and confirms. (Philippians 1:3-8; 4:10-19).

We can also instruct like this. We can also offer like this. We can also deliver like this. We can follow this three-part model in our own fundraising.

Paul’s gift acknowledgment delivers and confirms the ideal donor experience

In fundraising, the first response to a gift is usually the gift acknowledgment letter. This is the “thank you” note. It’s a chance to express gratitude. It’s often a chance to demonstrate the impact of the gift. What should such a letter look like? Fortunately, we have a good example.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he acknowledges their donation. This is not a simple “thanks.” It’s a confirmation of ideal giving. It confirms the donor instructions in 1 Timothy 6:17-19. It confirms the donor offer in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9. It delivers on each donor experience. It confirms that the donors were able to do all of the following:

1. Express care and concern for others

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:17, Paul instructs. Their giving should reflect that they are not above concern. They are not *hypsēlo-* [high/above] *phronein* [mind/concern].

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 8:8, Paul offers. He offers this as a test of their concern. He writes,

“I am not ordering you to do this. I am simply testing how real your love is by comparing it with the concern that others have shown.” (2 Corinthians 8:8 CEV).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:10, Paul confirms. They did it! Their gift proved their concern – *phronein*. It showed they were not above concern – *hypsēlophronein*. He writes of their gift,

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern [*phronein*] for me;” (Philippians 4:10a).

2. Respond to the mutual social norm of sharing

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:17-18, Paul instructs by comparison. Their giving should follow the fellowship-community norm of sharing whatever things God has supplied. He writes,

“God who richly supplies us [*hēmin*] with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18a).

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 8:1-8, Paul offers by comparison. He tells of inspirational giving by others in the fellowship community. He then proposes in verse 8,

“I am simply testing how real your love is by comparing it with the concern that others have shown.” (CEV).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:15, Paul confirms by comparison. They did it! Their giving excelled others in the fellowship community. He writes,

“after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone;” (Philippians 4:15b).

3. Respond to God’s rich provision in a way that pleases Him

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:17-18, Paul instructs. Their giving should fulfill God’s purpose. His purpose is enjoyment through good works. He explains,

“God, who richly supplies us with all things for [the purpose of] enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul offers. Giving to this project in the right way will please God. Giving that pleases God is giving that generates joy in the donor.

“for God loves a cheerful [joyful] giver”⁴ (2 Corinthians 9:7b).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:18, Paul confirms. They did it! Their gift was pleasing to God. He writes of their gift,

“what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.” (Philippians 4:18b-19a).

4. Are freed to enjoy doing good today because God will be supplying more tomorrow

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:17-18, Paul instructs. Their giving should reflect their trust that God is in the ongoing process of richly providing us for enjoyable good works.

“set their hope ... on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works,” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18a).

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul offers. They can give confidently. If they give, God will richly supply them for good works. He writes,

“whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give ... And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work ... you will be enriched in everything for all liberality,” (2 Corinthians 9:6b-7a, 8, 11a)⁵

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:18-19, Paul confirms. They did it! God accepted their gift. God will richly supply them. He writes of their gift,

“what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches” (Philippians 4:18b-19a).

5. Make a real difference for good

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul instructs. Their giving should do work – *ergon*. *Ergon* is work that accomplishes something.⁶ Donors are,

“to do good [*agatho-ergein*] to be rich in good works [*ergois kalois*].”

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul offers. God is able to richly supply so that,

“you may have an abundance for every good work [*ergon agathon*]”

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:14 & 18, Paul confirms. They did it! Their gift has done work that makes an impact. The donors “have done well” [*kalōs epoiēsate*].” *Epoiēsate* means to do work, create, construct, or accomplish.⁷

Their gift made a difference. Paul goes into detail. Their gift changed his situation from “difficulty” to “abundance.” He writes,

“Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my difficulty ... But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent” (Philippians 4:14, 18a).

6. Bring great beauty into the world

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul instructs. Their giving should do *kalos* good works. This “good” is beautiful, inspirational, and good to men’s eyes. He writes that they are,

“to be rich in good [*kalois*] works.”

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 8:20-21, Paul offers. He offers to deliver *kalos* in administering their gift.⁸ He writes,

“For we are taking pains to do what is right [*kala*] not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man.” (2 Corinthians 8:21 NIV).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:14, Paul confirms. They did it! The donors have accomplished *kalos*. He writes,

“you have done well [*kalōs*] to share with me.” (Philippians 4:14).

7. Have an identity as a good sharer

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul instructs. Their giving should reflect their identity [*einai*] as good [*eu-*] sharers [*metadotous*]. This is not just what they are doing. It’s who they are being. He writes that they are

“to be generous” [*eumetadotous einai*]

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 8:12, Paul offers. He explains that their gifts will be good [*eu-*] gifts. He writes,

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable [*eu-prosdektos*] (2 Corinthians 8:12 NIV).

“your previously promised generous gift [*eu-logian*], that the same would be ready as a generous gift [*eu-logian*], and not as one grudgingly given due to greediness.” (2 Corinthians 9:5).

He promises that the recipients will proclaim “good gift!” to God. “Thanksgiving” literally declares *eu-* [good] *charis* [gift].

“through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving [*eu-charistian*] to God ... not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks [*eu-charistiōn*] to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:11b, 12b NIV).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:18, Paul confirms. They did it! The donors have accomplished *eu-*giving. He writes,

“I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant [*eu-ōdias*] offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing [*eu-areston*] to God.” (Philippians 4:18).

Paul also gives thanks [*eu-charistō*] to God, i.e., proclaiming “good gift!” But he adds a twist. He doesn’t give thanks just for the contributions. He gives thanks for the donors themselves as sharers. He gives thanks for the donors “in view of” their entire history of sharing. He writes,

“I thank [*eu-charistō*] my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer

for you all, in view of your participation [also translated as ‘contribution’⁹ or ‘gracious contributions’¹⁰] in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:3-5).

8. Connect with an emotionally bonded, reciprocal fellowship community family

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul instructs. Their giving should not be just giving away to the outsider. They are to be *koinōnikous*. They are to be closely-connected sharers with the reciprocal fellowship-community family.

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul offers. The donors’ giving will be *koinōnias*. (2 Corinthians 9:13). They will follow the inspirational example of the Macedonians whose giving was *koinōnian*. (2 Corinthians 8:4).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 1:5, 4:14, and 4:15, Paul confirms. They did it! He calls their giving *koinōnia*. (Philippians 1:5). He calls their sharing *syn-koinōnēsantes*. (Philippians 4:14). He calls their gifts *ekoinōnēsen*. (Philippians 4:15).

-
- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:18, Paul instructs. Their giving should reflect their identity [*einai*] as reciprocal fellowship community sharers [*koinōnikous*]. This requires a reciprocating fellowship community [*koinōnia*]. Donors can’t be *koinōnikous* without a *koinōnia*.

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 9:13-14, Paul offers. He promises this reciprocating fellowship community. Recipients will respond with

- (1) Thanksgiving to God for the donors
- (2) Prayers for the donors, and
- (3) Emotionally connecting with the donors

He writes,

“Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will [1] glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution [*koinōnias*] to them and to all, while they also, [2] by prayer on your behalf, [3] yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.” (2 Corinthians 9:13-14).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 1:3-5, Paul confirms. It happened! He personally delivers on these promises of

- (1) Thanksgiving to God for the donors
- (2) Prayers for the donors, and
- (3) Emotionally connecting with the donors

He writes,

“[1] I thank my God every time I remember you. [2] In all my prayers for all of you, [3] I always pray with joy because of your partnership [*koinōnia*]” (Philippians 1:3-5a NIV).

Other versions replace “your partnership” with “your contribution.”¹¹ The Amplified Bible adds more detail,

reading,

“always offering every prayer of mine with joy (and with specific requests) for all of you, (thanking God) for your participation and partnership (both your comforting fellowship and gracious contributions)” (Philippians 1:4-5a AMP).

Paul promises the Corinthian donors that the recipients will “yearn for” them. Paul personally delivers this for the Philippian donors. He writes,

“how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:8b).

And he calls them his

“beloved brothers and sisters, whom I long to see” (Philippians 4:1).

9. Store up future benefits for themselves

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:19, Paul instructs. Their giving will result in enormous personal benefit. It results in,

“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future.” (1 Timothy 6:19).

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, Paul offers. Choosing to follow his charitable advice is profitable. In fact, that’s why he is telling them about the giving opportunity in the first place. He summarizes,

“And in this matter I am giving advice because it is profitable for you”¹² (2 Corinthians 8:10).

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 4:17, Paul confirms. He confirms that the donors' profit is already overflowing. He explains,

“not that I seek after the gift, but I seek after the fruit that is overflowing to your account;” (Philippians 4:17)¹³

Others use:

“the profit that is increasing to your account.”¹⁴

“the blessing which is accumulating for you”.¹⁵

10. Use their wealth for enjoyment

- Fundraising instruction letter:

In 1 Timothy 6:17-18, Paul instructs. Their giving should be for the purpose of enjoyment. Enjoyment is a motivation for and a result of sharing. Enjoyment is God's purpose in richly providing.

“God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

- Fundraising appeal letter:

In 2 Corinthians 8:2-4, Paul offers. He offers proof in the Macedonians' joyful giving experience. Joy was both the source of and the result of their sharing. He describes the origin of their giving as,

“their abundance of joy [*charas*]” which “overflowed in the wealth of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8:2).

He describes their giving experience as,

“They even asked and begged us to let them have the joy [*charin*] of giving their money for God's people” (2 Corinthians 8:4 CEV)¹⁶

- Gift acknowledgment letter:

In Philippians 1 & 4, Paul confirms. He confirms each of the previous results. Each of these is enjoyable for the donor. He goes further. He confirms that their giving has brought him joy. He confirms that they share in that joy with him.

He writes,

“I always pray with joy [*charas*] because of your partnership”¹⁷ or “your contribution.”¹⁸ (Philippians 1:4b-5a).

And also,

“it is a great joy [*echarēn*] to me that after so long a time you once more had the chance of showing that you care for me.” (Philippians 4:10 GNT).

Because of this partnership [*koinōnia*] with the donors, Paul’s joy is a shared joy.¹⁹ He writes,

“you are all partakers [*syn-koinōnous*] of my joy [*charitos*].” (Philippians 1:7b)²⁰

And also,

“I rejoice and share my joy [*syn-chairō*] with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy [*syn-chairete*] with me.” (Philippians 2:17b-18).

Completing the circle: Understanding good gratitude

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul describes the ideal donor experience. In 2 Corinthians 8 & 9, he offers the ideal donor experience. In Philippians 1 & 4, he confirms and delivers the ideal donor experience. This ideal donor experience delivers both donor impact and beneficial relationship.

First, it confirms donor impact. It answers the question,

“I made a gift. What changed?”

What kind of giving confirms this donor impact? Giving that delivers the 1 Timothy 6:17-19 experience does.

- Giving where the donors make a real difference for good [*agathoergein*] confirms their impact.
- Giving where the donors bring great beauty into the world [rich in *ergois kalois*] confirms their impact.

Delivering the ideal donor experience also confirms donor benefit. But this is a special kind of benefit. It's not a benefit from a financial transaction. It doesn't come from a market exchange. It's a more lasting, reliable benefit. It can't be lost. It continues even when we have nothing to offer.

This comes from mutual, reciprocal, social-emotional relationships. It comes from beneficial relationships with God and the fellowship community. Confirming this benefit means confirming these relationships. What kind of giving does this? Giving that delivers the 1 Timothy 6:17-19 experience does.

- Giving that responds to God's ongoing rich provision for good works confirms a reciprocal relationship.
- Giving that responds to the mutual social norm of sharing confirms a reciprocal relationship.
- Giving that expresses care and concern in an emotionally bonded, reciprocal fellowship-community family confirms a reciprocal relationship.
- Giving that God accepts, resulting in donors storing up benefits for themselves, confirms a reciprocal relationship.

In his fundraising instructions, Paul directs donors to pursue this ideal giving. This is giving with extreme donor impact and extreme donor benefit. In his fundraising appeal, Paul offers donors the chance to participate in this ideal giving.

In his gift acknowledgment, Paul confirms that the donors have indeed engaged in this kind of giving.

This kind of response to the donor's gift has a name. It's called gratitude. It's good gratitude.

Good gratitude confirms impact. Without an impact, there's no reason to be grateful.

Good gratitude goes further. It's not just gratitude for the gift. It's gratitude for the giver. It's a relationship signal. It confirms an open-ended willingness to benefit the donor. It delivers donor benefit through relationship.

Scripture models this good gratitude. It confirms the donor's impact. It confirms the donor's beneficial relationships. It delivers the ideal donor experience.

PART II

BARRIERS TO DELIVERING THE IDEAL DONOR EXPERIENCE

(Message 14: You're grabbing the best life experience!)

Barriers to gratitude: Obligation giving

Good gratitude confirms donor impact. Good gratitude also confirms the donor benefit of a reciprocal relationship. Good gratitude messages are powerful. They work. They work in theory, research, and practice. So why don't we see them more often? Why are they often missing in charities, churches, and Christian ministries?

One barrier comes from not knowing how to do it well. Leadership may misunderstand what good gratitude is. This leads to responses that don't confirm the donor's impact. Or, they don't confirm the right relationship. They don't confirm an emotionally bonded, reciprocal, social relationship.

Misunderstanding this relationship causes problems. If charities see fundraising as begging, gratitude will be ineffective or absent. A beggar's ask lowers their social status. A beggar's gratitude does the same. Both of these are unpleasant to do. And they reflect the wrong relationship. Begging matches a vertical "giving down" relationship. Jesus instructed such "giving down" [*eleēmosynē*] to be done only in secret.²¹

Good gratitude instead supports a horizontal, mutual, "sharing across" relationship [*koinōnikous*]. Here, gratitude doesn't lower status. Instead, it helps bind together the shared fellowship community. It supports an emotionally bonded, reciprocal, social relationship of equality.

However, often the biggest barrier is not misunderstanding gratitude. It's rejecting gratitude. The leadership is not just ineffective in their gratitude. They aren't even trying. They aren't interested in doing it at all.

Why not? Because they see the donors' giving as obligatory. If donors are obligated to give, then gratitude isn't necessary. The gift is simply expected. Why might charities feel this way? Why might they feel that their donors are obligated to give?

Charities may feel this way because the need is so great. The need is great, and donors have wealth. Therefore, donors are supposed to give. The need is so great that donors are obligated to give.

Charities may feel this way because they are so great. They do such amazing work. They have earned the donation. One nonprofit management book describes fundraising as, "creating a constituency which supports the organization because it deserves it."²²

The charity administrators have earned those gifts. They've earned the gifts with their track record of heroic work. Therefore, donors are supposed to give. The organization is so great that donors are obligated to give.

Finally, religious charities may feel this way if they see all giving as a compulsory duty.²³ In this view, giving is not optional. Even wealth sharing is not optional. Giving is an obligatory command. Donors don't need to be motivated. They just need to be reminded that their giving is mandatory.

These approaches to giving and gratitude can be attractive to leadership. They elevate the status of the leadership. Leadership has a right to the gift because of their

office, their cause, or their inspiring history. Leadership doesn't need to say, "Thank you." The money rightly belongs to them. The donor's gift is simply expected.

In this view, the charity doesn't need to deliver a donor experience. They don't need to deliver an experience of donor impact or agency. They don't need to offer beneficial donor relationships. The donor is supposed to deliver value to the charity, not vice versa.

This traditional view is often how charity managers see fundraising. One study looked at senior leadership's views of the importance of various fundraising outcomes. The leaders were interested in all of them. Except one.

Most fundraising managers felt this one outcome wasn't even "slightly important" to senior leadership. It was also the least helpful in justifying a fundraising budget. That outcome was this:

"Predicted improvements in donors' feelings of satisfaction with or commitment to the organization."²⁴

The donors' feelings or experiences were beside the point. The point was "money-getting." (The other outcomes measured financial results.) The problem wasn't failing to deliver a positive donor experience. The problem was not even trying. The charities' leadership simply didn't care. Donor emotions were not of interest.

This is not an issue of not knowing how to express gratitude. It's an issue of not wanting to do it. Leadership doesn't express gratitude towards donors because they don't feel gratitude towards donors. They aren't trying to reciprocate. They aren't trying to give back. The donors are just ATMs. ATMs are there only to spit out the cash.

Barriers to gratitude in church fundraising

Charities are often bad at gratitude. Churches can be even worse. In his national study of church fundraising, George Barna explains simply,

“Most churches are not good at thanking their supporters.”²⁵

Why? He finds four reasons:

1. “Pastors expect people to give ... giving is taken for granted.”

This lack of gratitude can be an oversight. But often, it’s intentional. It’s intentionally ignoring the gift. In many cases,

2. “Those who could express thanks do not know who gives.”

Others reject the concept of gratitude. This was expressed in statements such as

3. “Overt appreciation cheapens the gift”

or,

4. “People should not need to be thanked ... giving is the people’s duty.”

This is an anti-gratitude attitude. It comes from the notion of obligation giving. When all giving is compulsory, gratitude makes no sense.

This approach to giving and gratitude can be attractive to church leadership. It’s attractive for a simple reason. It means they don’t have to do anything. They can just ignore the gift. They don’t have to express gratitude. They don’t have to respond to a gift at all.

Scripture and the compulsory giving mindset

Compulsory giving makes life easy for church leadership. They don't have to fundraise. They don't have to acknowledge donors. They don't have to acknowledge donations. And they don't have to express gratitude.

If all giving is a mandatory obligation, church leaders don't have to fundraise. Charitable giving is not a field in which they need to

“think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.” (Hebrews 10:24a NLT).

They don't have to,

“Instruct those who are rich ... to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17a, 18).

They would never need to hassle a delinquent gift pledger, as Paul did, advising them,

“But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the willingness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.” (2 Corinthians 8:11).

If all giving is a mandatory obligation, church leaders don't need to acknowledge donations. If a lapsed donor makes a gift, there is no need to respond, as Paul did,

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me;” (Philippians 4:10).

If all giving is a mandatory obligation, church leaders don't need to respond with joy. They don't need to respond at all. They certainly don't need to honor or praise the donors. They never need to tell donors that they,

“have done well to share” (Philippians 4:14b).

They never need to commend a donor, publicly or otherwise. We wouldn't catch them writing publicly,

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe ... for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.” (Romans 16:1a-2b).

If all giving is a mandatory obligation, church leaders don't need to publicize donors' gifts to inspire others. They would never need to motivate voluntary giving by sharing a story of other donors who, in

“their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave voluntarily, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:2-4).

In fact, they wouldn't need to talk about other donors at all. They certainly would never consider publicly naming a list of individual donors. We wouldn't catch them openly writing about

“Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.” (Luke 8:2b-3).

They would never publicly name an individual donor. They certainly wouldn't name a donor and describe exactly what he or she gave. That would be highly inappropriate. We would never catch them publicly describing,

“Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), owned a tract of land. So he sold it,

and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”
(Acts 4:36-37).

The only thing more offensive than this would be to publicly detail the precise market value of the named donor's gift. They would never share that

“Mary then took a pound of very expensive perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus” (John 12:3).

They would never publicize that the gifted asset could have been

“sold for over three hundred denarii” (Mark 14:5).

“sold for more than a year's wages” (Mark 14:5 NIV).

You see, detailing such a massive gift of wealth could make others feel bad. Such a wealthy donor's large asset gift might be allowed, but it would never be publicized. They would never respond to a large asset gift by saying,

“Truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the entire world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her” (Mark 14:9).

They would never do any of these things. They wouldn't need to. They wouldn't need to if all giving were compulsory. If it's compulsory, donors don't “decide” to give anyway. They are required to give. They just need to be told of their mandatory obligation.

If all giving were a mandatory obligation, church leaders wouldn't tell donors

“Each one must do just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion” (2 Corinthians 9:7a).

They would never say this because donors are, in fact, “under compulsion” to give. They are “under compulsion” because their giving is required. It’s mandatory.

If all giving is mandatory, church and ministry leaders don’t need to do anything. They don’t need to fundraise. They don’t need to acknowledge donors. They don’t need to acknowledge donations. And they don’t need to express gratitude.

Mandatory giving is the easy button for church and ministry leadership. It’s easy, but there are two problems with it. It doesn’t match scripture. And it doesn’t work.

Theology and gratitude to donors

A theology of mandatory giving makes gratitude to donors superfluous. It makes gratitude unnecessary. A theology of asceticism goes further. It makes gratitude offensive.

In asceticism, giving is supposed to be painful. That pain is what makes the donor righteous. Responding to a gift with real gratitude makes giving more enjoyable. That conflicts with asceticism. Gratitude also reflects a willingness to act with reciprocity. Reciprocity makes giving less costly. That conflicts with asceticism, too.

Gratitude makes giving more enjoyable and less costly. In asceticism, this makes the donor less righteous. Good gratitude pushes giving away from asceticism. Good gratitude makes giving more fun. It does so in these ways:

- It pushes giving towards being “party-time” enjoyable – *apolausin*. (1 Timothy 6:17).

- It pushes giving towards being “hilariously” joyful – *hilaron*. (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- It pushes giving towards being more blessed or happy – *makarion* – than receiving a gift. (Acts 20:35).
- It pushes giving towards a joyful experience that results from being, “filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.” (2 Corinthians 8:2 NLT).

In a theology of mandatory giving, gratitude to donors makes no sense. In a theology of asceticism, it’s even offensive. We won’t find gratitude to donors in either of these views. Where will we find it? We’ll find it in scripture. We’ll find it in Biblical fundraising.

¹ Legacy Standard Bible

² Panas, J. (2014). *Mega gifts: Who give them, who gets them*. Emerson & Church. p. 137.

³ The gift acknowledgment portions open (Philippians 1:3-8) and close (Philippians 4:10-19) the body of the letter. The first immediately follows the opening greeting. The second immediately precedes the final closing greeting.

⁴ Aramaic Bible in Plain English, “God loves the joyful giver.”; Godbey New Testament, “God loves the hilarious giver.”; Contemporary English Version, “God loves people who love to give.”; Good News Translation, “God loves the one who gives gladly.”; One commentator holds “that the sense of ‘love’ is ‘approves’ or ‘values’” [Thrall, M. E. (2000). *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. T & T Clark. p. 576.]

⁵ This idea is expanded in 2 Corinthians 9:10-11, “Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.” An interesting variation of indicative and optative moods arises here. As one commentator explains, the largest group of sources, “has Paul making three statements: God will supply, will multiply, will increase. This contrasts with the reading of [an alternate group of sources], where we have three optatives: may God supply, multiply, increase. The other two groups of witnesses alternate between indicative and optative.” [Thrall, M. E. (2000). *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. T & T Clark. p. 584-585.] This optative sense matches with the potentiality of verse 9:8, “God is able [*dynatei*] to bless you.” Such an approach then creates a contrast with Philippians 4:19, where Paul uses the future indicative active, “And my God will supply [*plērōsei*] all your needs”. This would match with the idea that in his fundraising appeal letter, Paul offers the potential for donor benefits, while in his donor acknowledgment letter, he confirms the certainty of those benefits.

⁶ “(from *ergō*, “to work, accomplish”) – a work or worker who accomplishes something ... a deed (action) that carries out (completes) an inner desire (intention, purpose).” [Hill, G., & Archer, G. (2021). *HELPS Lexicon [Software]*. HELPS Ministries Inc. www.thediscoverybible.com.]

⁷ Thayer, J. H. (1889). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament*. American Book Company. *Poieō*.

⁸ See translations of *kala* as “good” in Legacy Standard Bible, Douay-Rheims Bible. Others use “honorable” or “right.”

⁹ Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation

¹⁰ Amplified Bible

¹¹ Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation

¹² Christian Standard Bible

¹³ Literal Standard Version; Young’s Literal Translation

¹⁴ Christian Standard Bible; Holman Christian Standard Bible

¹⁵ Amplified Bible

¹⁶ Contemporary English Version; Other versions use “the favor,” “blessing,” “grace,” or “privilege.”

¹⁷ New International Version

¹⁸ Literal Standard Version; Young's Literal Translation

¹⁹ Paul also references this connection between joy and shared fellowship in Philippians 2:2, "make my joy [*charan*] complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."

²⁰ Douay-Rheims Bible; Catholic Public Domain Version. Others replace "joy" with "grace," "favor," or "privilege." Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 2:3b, Paul writes, "having confidence in you all that my joy [*chara*] was the joy of you all."

²¹ Matthew 6:3-4a, "But when you give to the poor [*eleēmosynēn*], do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your charitable giving [*eleēmosynē*] will be in secret;"

²² Drucker, P. (1990). *Managing the nonprofit organization*. HarperCollins. p. 56.

²³ For those who hold that income-tithing is a compulsory duty, note that this question is separate from the special ministry described in 1 Timothy 6:17-19. The 1 Timothy 6: 17-19 ministry is instead focused on wealth, wealth holders, and wealth sharing. Such sharing from wealth (not income) is never compulsory either in the New Testament or the Old Testament.

²⁴ Bennett, R. (2007). The use of marketing metrics by British fundraising charities: a survey of current practice. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(9-10), 959-989.

²⁵ Barna, G. (1997). *How to increase giving in your church*. Regal Books. p. 121-122.

Chapter 17

What's missing from your fundraising story?

- *Biblical fundraising focuses on the donor's story.*
- *Ordinary fundraising focuses only on the charity's story.*

1 Timothy 6:17-19, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be high-minded or to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

Check your fundraising list

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19, Paul is doing something unique. He's telling Timothy how to encourage generosity in others. He's explaining to Timothy how to fundraise. He's giving Timothy the steps of the major gift fundraising process. Paul is not just being theological. He's being practical. He was, after all, a practicing fundraiser.

So, let's get practical. Let's answer some practical questions. Why doesn't our ministry or church have more resources? Why aren't we raising the big gifts that other charities do? The answer is simple. It's because we aren't following the instructions.

Something is missing. What's missing? That's easy to find. We can turn this sentence into a checklist. If we can't check a box, then that's what is missing. Think about this in your situation. How many of these items can you check?

- ___ Do you have a ministry to the rich?
"To those who are rich" [*Tois plousiois*]

- Are you presenting this as an opportune moment?
“rich in the now time” [*en tō nyn kairō*] or “rich at this opportune moment” [*en tō nyn aiōni*]
- Are you coming alongside them to instruct?
“Instruct” [*para-angelle*]
- Are you instructing with the confidence of an authorized messenger?
“Instruct” [*para-angelle*]
- Are you persistently instructing again and again?
“Instruct” [*parangelle* – Greek present tense]
- Are you connecting their giving to their social identity?
“not to be high-minded” [*mē hypselophronein*]
- Are you connecting their giving to their spiritual life history? “nor to have set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God” [*mēde ēlpikenai epi ploutou adēlotēti, all epi Theō*]
- Are you instructing about wealth and wealth sharing rather than just income and income sharing?
“rich ... riches ... richly ... rich ... good sharer of riches/abundance ... treasure ... (financial) foundation” [*plousiois, ploutou, plousiōs, ploutein, eumetadotous, apothēsaurizontas, themelion*]
- Are you discussing the past origin story of their wealth?
“God, who richly supplies us with all things” [*Theō tō parechonti hēmin panta plousiōs*]
- Are you discussing the present uncertainties and opportunities for their wealth?
“rich at this opportune moment” / “rich in the now time”; “the uncertainty of riches”; “God who richly supplies ... for enjoyment” [*plousiois en tō nyn kairō/aiōni; ploutou adēlotēti; eis apolausin*]

- Are you discussing the future disappearance and potential future impact of their wealth?
“the uncertainty of riches ... storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” [*ploutou adēlotēti; themelion kalon eis to mellon*]
- Are you presenting them with opportunities to enjoy their wealth by using it to buy work?
“for enjoyment: to do intrinsically good work, to be rich in beautifully good works” [*eis apolausin: -ergein, ergois*]
- Are you presenting them with opportunities to enjoy their wealth by using it to accomplish intrinsically good work? “for enjoyment: to do intrinsically good work” [*eis apolausin: agathoergein*]
- Are you presenting them with opportunities to enjoy their wealth by using it to accumulate so many beautiful, visualizable, inspirational good works that they become rich in them?
“for enjoyment: ... to be rich in beautifully good works” [*eis apolausin: ploutein en ergois kalois*]
- Are you making them feel like they themselves have done intrinsically good work?
“to do good” [*agathoergein*]
- Are you making them feel that they are personally the owners and collectors of beautiful, good works?
“to be rich in good works” [*ploutein en ergois kalois*]
- Are you taking the time to help them get ready to become joyfully sharers of abundance?
“to be generous and ready” or “ready to be joyful sharers of abundance” [*eumetadotous einai*]

- Are you offering giving opportunities that more closely connect them to a family-like, mutually-sharing, fellowship community?
“ready to share” [*einai koinōnikous*]
- Are you offering them opportunities to build up an endowment-like, beautiful, visualizable foundation for the future?
“storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future” [*apothēsurizontas heautois themelion kalon eis to mellon*]
- Do you feel and act as if you are offering them the chance to experience life that is really life both now and later?
“so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”
[*hina epilabōntai tēs ontōs zōēs*]

This checklist gives us the goals. It shows us how to act. It shows us what to say. It shows us how to say it. It gives us the guidelines for effective major gift fundraising. It’s a great checklist. But it’s not just a checklist. It’s also a story.

Check your fundraising story

This passage works great as a checklist. But it’s not just a list. It’s also a story. This isn’t just an exegetical curiosity. It matters. It matters because story works. Story is memorable. Story is compelling.

This story works for donors. The most compelling story for a person is his or her own story. So, too, for a donor. The most compelling story for the donor is not about the organization. It’s about the donor. It’s their donor story.

This story also works for fundraisers. A story works better than a list of technical terms. We could use a fundraising

list such as:

- Identification
- Cultivation
- Solicitation
- Recognition
- Stewardship

Those terms are technically correct. But they're not intuitive. They're not memorable. It's easy to forget steps. It's easy to do them wrong.

A story is different. If something is missing from a story, it's obvious. If an action doesn't match with a character's role, it stands out. A story is more intuitive. Instead of a technical list, it's more natural to ask,

- Do we have the right story characters?
- Do we have the right story setting?
- Does the call to adventure promise a personally meaningful victory to the main character?
- Does the main character's backstory (values, life story, and people) compel him to accept this particular call to adventure?
- Does his resulting journey actually lead to a successful victory at the story climax?
- Does he receive public or private confirmation of his victory (and his identity as a victory winner) at the story's resolution?

These are steps in a classic story. They're intuitive. They're memorable. They're also included in Paul's message. Scripture provides a compelling fundraising story.

It's a story. It's also practical. It's a step-by-step guide for major gift fundraising. We can treat it like a cookbook. Follow the instructions, and good results will ensue. Skip some steps, and it won't turn out as well.

If we're not succeeding in major gift fundraising, we need to check our story. Does our story have all the elements? We'll likely find something missing. We'll likely find a story problem. So, let's consider some story problems. Let's ask, "What's missing from our fundraising story?"

Wrong main character?

This is a ministry to the rich. It's a ministry to those with accumulated wealth. Without this people group, this ministry can't start. Without high-capacity donors, major gift fundraising can't start. If we don't have this main character, we can't tell this story. The story starts with the people. That's the first step.

Now, suppose you have these people. Another character question remains. What role are they playing in your story?

Often, charities get this main character wrong. They don't want the donor to be the main character. They want to be the main character. They want to be the hero, the actor, and the decider in the story. They want to have agency. They want to tell a different story. They want to tell the charity administrator hero story.

In that story, the donors play just a bit part. Donors are supposed to honor the administrators' heroic work by showering them with money. Or maybe they'll put some gas in the tank for the heroic administrator's grand journey. At best, donors get the role of "Gas station attendant #3." They're bit players in the story. That story might be compelling for charity

administrators. But it won't motivate major life investment gifts.

The problem is a story character problem. In the donor's story, the main character is the donor. The charity is just a tool. It's a tool the donor can use to do good. It might be a wonderful tool. But it's not the main character. It's an instrument the donor can pick up and use to create good works.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 is a story about the donors. They are the main characters. This isn't subtle. It's a story about them. It's about their identity. It's about who they have been in the past. It's about who they are already being today. It's about who they will be in the future.

It's a story about their impact. They are the ones who do intrinsically good works. They are the ones who become rich in beautifully good works. Their actions result in their benefits. They are the ones storing up for themselves. They are the ones who violently grab hold of that which is really life. They are the story's main characters.

If we get the main character wrong, then we'll be telling the wrong story. We might have a great plot. We might have wonderful dialogue. But we won't be telling the right story. Without the right main character, we're not following the story pattern. If we don't follow the story pattern, we're unlikely to succeed.

Wrong supporting character?

This story includes another character. It's a supporting character. It's the authorized messenger who comes alongside to deliver the challenge [*parangelle*]. It's the one who ministers to the rich Christian. In story, this is the guiding sage who makes the call to adventure.

Often, charities get this character wrong, too. Sometimes, they don't want to minister to the rich Christians. They just want money from the rich Christians. They just want to be "fund-raisers" or "money-getters." This doesn't match the scriptural role. And it doesn't work.

Sometimes, they don't want to come alongside the rich Christians. They prefer to stand far off. They're afraid. Or they're hostile. With any other people group, they would jump in. They would learn about their world, their life, their language, their concerns, and their needs. But not with this group – not with the rich. They don't want to come alongside. They want to keep their distance. This doesn't match the scriptural role. And it doesn't work.

Sometimes, they'll come alongside but they won't deliver the authorized message. They'll be friendly. But then they won't give the call to adventure. They won't make the challenge to enjoy wealth by using it to do good. This doesn't match the scriptural role. And it doesn't work.

Sometimes, they'll deliver that message, but they'll do it with hesitation. They'll do it sheepishly. They won't act like an authorized messenger. They won't act as if they're offering the world's best life experience. This doesn't match the scriptural role. And it doesn't work.

Sometimes, they'll deliver the message, but only once. They won't do it with persistence. They'll stop at the first no. Or they'll stop at the first yes. They won't do it in the Greek present tense. They won't continue to do it again and again. They might commit one quick "drive-by" asking. But they won't continue to come alongside for the donor's whole journey. This doesn't match the scriptural role. And it doesn't work.

If we get the supporting character wrong, then we'll get the story wrong. We'll be playing the wrong role. Without this supporting character, the story fails. There's no one coming alongside the rich Christian. There's no ministry relationship. There's no one delivering the authorized message. There's no call to adventure. There's no one guiding them on the journey after the challenge. There's no guiding sage. No one continues to walk with them after the ask.

Without the right supporting character, we're not following the story pattern. When we don't follow the story pattern, it doesn't work as well. When our actions don't match the scriptural role, our results will be weak.

Wrong setting?

This is a story about wealth. It's a story about wealth holders. It's a story about wealth disappearance. It's a story about wealth enjoyment. It's a story about wealth impact. It's a story about wealth sharing. It's a story about wealth diversification. It's a story about permanent wealth preservation. In one sentence, Paul references wealth seven times. This is a story set in the land of wealth and wealth sharing.

Why does that matter? It matters because this is not a story about income or income sharing. Income sharing is fine. But that's not this story. This is a story about accumulated wealth. It's a story about buried, hidden piles of disappearing wealth.

Of course, it's a stewardship story. But it's a specific kind of stewardship story. It's not a story for the bingeing bad steward. It's a story for the burying bad steward.

Suppose a person has wealth. Their plan is to manage it. Protect it. Preserve it. Bury it. Hide it away in a napkin. Stack it up in a barn for the future. Bury it in the ground. Sock it away because “you never know.”

The problem is this. We do know. We know the future. They know the future. Their wealth is going to disappear. They will lose it all – either during life or at death. That’s the future of their wealth.

Just hiding it all away for the future is not OK. God responds to this by declaring,

“You fool!” (Luke 12:20b)

The master says of the burying steward,

“And throw the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:30).

We care about our people group. We don’t want their story to end that way. That’s why we’re willing to do the hard stuff. That’s why we’re willing to have wealth conversations.

We must have wealth conversations. Income-sharing conversations don’t help. Income sharing doesn’t touch the buried wealth. The problem of the burying bad steward is not an income-sharing problem. It’s a wealth-sharing problem. That’s why there is this special ministry just for the wealth holders.

Having wealth conversations is central to this ministry. It’s also effective fundraising. As a matter of practical fundraising, it can be transformational. This happens when a donor’s giving moves beyond disposable income sharing. It happens when they begin to see their accumulated wealth as donation relevant.

Changing this mental accounting changes giving. This isn't just theology. It's practical reality. We see it in experiments. We see it in national data. We see it in what the most effective major gift fundraisers do.

This is practically effective. It's spiritually critical. But for many, it's scary. Talking about wealth feels uncomfortable. Talking about another person's wealth feels even more uncomfortable.

We might feel unqualified. We're not wealthy. Maybe we're not wealth experts. Fear is a barrier. Ignorance is a barrier. These keep us from having wealth conversations.

Such barriers are not unique to this ministry. Reaching out to any new people group can feel daunting. Whether the ministry is to prisoners, an overseas community, or even "to the rich," it will require work. There will always be a lot to learn.

For this people group, we can learn about wealth. We can learn about wealth management and wealth sharing.¹ We can learn to have wealth conversations.² We can help donors move from wealth to abundance. We can get them ready to be good-joyful-abundance sharers. We can put in the time and the effort. We can overcome our fear.

What's the quickest way to start? Share stories. Share donor stories. Share asset donor stories. Asset donor stories are wealth-sharing stories. Sharing asset donor stories helps to create a social norm. It helps to build the sense that

"People like us enjoy making gifts like this."

But what if we don't have these stories? What if our donors don't do things like this – yet? That's OK. We can borrow these stories. These asset donor stories don't have to be

our donor stories. We can borrow them from other organizations. We can borrow them from history.³ We can borrow them from the Bible.⁴

Wherever we find them, we need to tell donor stories with the right setting. We don't just tell donor stories. We tell asset donor stories. We tell wealth-sharing stories.

We also help donors to tell their own stories. We help them tell stories set in the land of wealth and wealth sharing. We have wealth-sharing conversations.

Without the right setting, we're not following the story pattern. When we don't follow the story pattern, our fundraising won't work as well. When our message doesn't match the scriptural message, our results will be weak.

Wrong backstory?

Paul's fundraising story doesn't start by talking about a gift. It doesn't start by talking about an organization, a cause, or a project. It starts by talking about the donor. It starts with the donor's backstory.

In a classic story structure, the backstory establishes the main character's identity. It establishes identity by showing his values, his people, and his life story.

This won't be just a random set of facts. It will link to the call to adventure. The backstory establishes why the main character will accept the call to adventure. He will accept the challenge because of who he is. He will accept because of his identity.

Paul's fundraising story begins with the donor's identity. It begins with their values, their people, and their life story.

This isn't just a random set of facts. It links to their call to adventure. This backstory establishes why they will accept the call to adventure. They will accept the challenge to enjoy wealth by using it

“to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:18).

They will accept this challenge because of their values, their people, and their life story. They will accept this challenge because of who they are. They will accept because of their identity.

What are their values? They are in the already-in-progress process of being not “high-minded.” They are not above or separated from the fellowship community. They are connected to their people.

Who are their people? This is the fellowship community. It's the *koinōnia*. This connection is why the rich Christians will *koinōnikous*. They will share with the fellowship community.

What is their life story? Beyond their already-in-progress values, they have a history. In that life history, they have already, in the past (Greek perfect tense), placed their trust in a richly providing God. They have not placed their trust in hidden, disappearing, uncertain riches. That past decision has a continuing impact on the present (Greek perfect tense).

They will accept the challenge. They will accept the challenge because of their values, their people, and their life story. They will accept the challenge because of their identity.

We can start our fundraising with this same kind of backstory. We can start with the donor's identity connections to the cause, the community, the project, or the organization.

We can start with their values connections. We can start with their people connections. We can start with their life history connections.

What if we don't know any of these things? We can ask. We can ask to learn. We can also ask to do something even more powerful. We can ask to help the donors tell their own personal donor story.

We can ask how their giving reflects their values.⁵ We can ask what inspires them to give.⁶ We can ask what inspired their first gift to the organization.⁷ We can ask how the cause or organization has been important in their life.⁸ We can ask about any loved ones who also cared about the cause. We can ask about their philanthropic role models.⁹ We can ask how they learned to be generous.¹⁰

We don't start by talking about a gift. We don't start by talking about our organization, our cause, or our project. We start with the donors. We start by learning about our donors. We can uncover their philanthropic backstory. And so can they. We can uncover the values, people, and life story elements that motivate their generosity. And so can they.

And as we learn this backstory, we can make connections. We can connect these motivations to intrinsically good works. We can connect these motivations to beautiful good works. We can connect them with opportunities to share with the fellowship community. We can connect their backstory with the most compelling calls to adventure.

This backstory is critical. If we skip the donor's philanthropic backstory, then we'll get the story wrong. Without the donor's backstory, we're not following the story pattern. When we don't follow the story pattern, our

fundraising won't work as well. When our message doesn't match the scriptural message, our results will be weak.

Wrong (or missing) call to adventure?

This is a message with a challenge. It's a challenge to use wealth

“for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

We are to instruct the wealth holder. We are to come alongside to deliver an authorized message [*parangelle*]. But this is not instructing just to teach something. It's instructing to do something. Our instruction must include a challenge to act.

We can get this challenge wrong in several ways. We can get it wrong if we aren't making a challenge. We might be friendly. We might come alongside. But if we aren't making this wealth enjoyment challenge, then we aren't delivering the authorized message.

We can get this challenge wrong if we're just asking for money. The direction is not to ask people for money. It's to instruct people to enjoy their wealth by using it to do good works. It's a call to do intrinsically good works. It's a call to collect beautiful, inspirational good works. It's a call to connect more deeply with a fellowship community. It's a call to adventure that promises a meaningful victory. If we're just asking for money, we're doing it wrong.

We can get this challenge wrong even if people give. The challenge is for wealth enjoyment. If they're not enjoying it, then it's a failure. The goal is not giving. It's giving with the right emotion. It's giving that is fun, happy, blessed, and

joyful.¹¹ If our challenge is a call to obligation or suffering, we're doing it wrong.

We can get this challenge wrong even if they give with the right emotion. Giving with the right emotion is a great result. But if it's just income sharing, then it won't touch their buried wealth. It won't address the problem of the burying bad steward. This passage is not a call to income sharing. It's a call to wealth sharing. It's a call to wealth enjoyment. If our challenge is only a call to make small gifts from disposable income, we're doing it wrong.

The challenge is not about a one-time gift. It's about the lifelong use of wealth. It's about not ending as the burying bad steward. It's about wealth enjoyment. The story is not about a gift. It's about a person. It's about their overall life and wealth journey. If our challenge is only a call to make one gift, we're doing it wrong.

When we get the challenge wrong, it doesn't affect just the donor. It also affects the fundraiser. If we're just asking for money, then we're trying to take from the donor. We're being a burden. Such giving leads to "donor fatigue." It also leads to fundraiser fatigue. That's not this role. That's not this message.

Instead, this challenge is a call to wealth enjoyment. Which of these jobs sounds more attractive?

1. I ask people for money.

Or,

2. I help our donors get more enjoyment from their wealth. I share opportunities for gifts that match with their values and life history. I share opportunities for gifts that do real good. I share opportunities for gifts that bring beauty into the world. I share opportunities for

them to give well and joyfully. I share opportunities that deeply connect donors with a mutual fellowship community. Ultimately, I help to find or construct giving opportunities that will be the most enjoyable, meaningful, and impactful for the donors.

The first job doesn't sound attractive. The second one does. The first job doesn't deliver the scriptural message. The second one does.

The point is this. We're offering a great deal. We're offering the best deal ever! We're offering the best life ever! We're offering the opportunity for wealth enjoyment.

Anxiously hoarding it just to die with it is not the way to wealth enjoyment. Just trying to stuff in even more consumption is not the way to wealth enjoyment. This ministry shows the way to wealth enjoyment.

The wealth enjoyment challenge provides massive value to the donor. Understanding this changes the fundraiser's job. It changes the fundraiser's confidence, persistence, and courage.

Getting the challenge right is critical. It's critical for the donor. It's also critical for the fundraiser. The challenge is a call to use wealth,

“for enjoyment: to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,” (1 Timothy 6:17b-18).

If we get this challenge wrong, we'll get the story wrong. Without the wealth enjoyment challenge, we're not following the story pattern. When we don't follow the story pattern, our fundraising won't work as well. When our message doesn't match the scriptural message, our results will be weak.

Wrong (or missing) victory?

Our challenge should promise a victory. We can also help to deliver these “victory” results after a gift. But the “victory” process starts much earlier. We can begin by helping donors to define a personally meaningful victory. This can start with questions.

We can ask about their “blue sky” goals. We can ask – if money were no object – what kind of an impact they would like to have on the world.¹² Or, on this cause. Or, at this organization. We can ask what they want to achieve with their charitable donations.¹³ We can ask what they could accomplish with their wealth that would be the most meaningful for them.¹⁴

These questions help uncover what good works would bring the most enjoyment to the donor. Eventually, these conversations can connect to projects at our organization. These are the projects that can promise a personally meaningful victory for the donor. This connection makes the challenge more compelling. It can lead to major life investment gifts.

It’s not enough to describe our organization’s inspiring history. It’s not enough to show that our organization has become rich in good works. Instead, the promised victory is that the donors will do good work. They will do intrinsically good work. They will become rich in beautiful, noble, inspirational good works. They will thereby enjoy their wealth.

These are not just promises to be made at the challenge. These are promises to be delivered. The donors should experience their impact. They should feel that they have done good work. That’s what leads to repeated giving. That’s what leads to big giving. That’s what leads to wealth enjoyment.

If this donor victory experience is missing, we’ll get the

story's climax wrong. If we don't deliver these results, we're not following the story pattern. When we don't follow the story pattern, our fundraising won't work as well. When our donor experience doesn't match the scriptural message, our results will be weak.

Wrong (or missing) resolution?

In a classic story, the call to adventure promises the hope of a victory. Later, the climax delivers the victory. Finally, the resolution confirms the meaningfulness of the victory.

How does the resolution do this? It may show that others recognize the importance of the victory. It will also confirm the main character's new identity. Because of the journey, he has become a different person. His identity has grown. He has transformed.

We see the same elements in this passage. The results from the donor's giving start simple enough. The donor does good work. But then the results expand. They affect the donor's identity. He not only does an intrinsically good work. He does so many beautifully good works that he becomes something. He becomes rich in a new way. He becomes rich in beautiful good works.

Next, this identity impact becomes even more blunt. The giving modifies the donor's "I am" verb [*einai*]. The donor becomes a good abundance sharer [*eumetadotous*] with the fellowship community [*koinōnikous*]. This isn't just what he does. It's clearly and plainly who he is. It's his identity. It's his "I am" statement.

In fundraising, we can confirm this identity growth. We can confirm what the donor did. We can confirm the impact of the gift. But we can do more. We can confirm who the donor is

being. We can confirm the donor's philanthropic identity.

Effective gratitude can provide this story resolution. It can include gratitude for the impact of the gift. This confirms the victory. It can also include gratitude for the donors themselves. This is gratitude for who they are being. It confirms their admirable philanthropic identity.

Understanding this story element helps differentiate between weak and strong gratitude. It helps differentiate between the following:

1. "Thank you for your gift."
2. "Your gift paid for the work that accomplished X. Thank you for making this happen!"
3. "I just wanted to let you know we've been praying for you. Thank you for being with us and for being so generous. In other words, thank you for being you!"

The first response doesn't match the story. There is no victory. There is no identity confirmation. There is no relationship. There's just a financial transfer.

The second response does match the story. It confirms the victory. The donor made something happen. Their work accomplished something good.

The third response matches the story, too. It confirms their positive identity. It confirms who they are being. It confirms their connection to the mutual fellowship community. Being part of this community also connects donors with each other. These connections help confirm the meaningfulness of their giving. They support continued giving. They enhance the donor's experience.

If we focus only on getting from the donor, we'll often skip the story resolution. We won't confirm the meaningfulness of their victory. We won't confirm their resulting positive identity. We won't deliver the full story. We'll tend to stop at the ask. But if our goal is donor joy, we won't leave this part out. If we focus on helping the donor, we won't make that mistake.

Delivering the full donor story does something else. It means we aren't limited to just repeatedly making the challenge. We won't call only to ask for money. We'll also call to confirm their impact. We'll call to express gratitude for that impact. We'll call to express gratitude for who the donor is being. We'll come alongside for the entire donor journey. We'll help to deliver donor enjoyment. We'll deliver a donor experience that they'll want to repeat.

If this confirmation experience is missing, we'll get the story's resolution wrong. If we don't deliver this ending, we're not following the story pattern. When we don't follow the story pattern, our fundraising won't work as well. When our donor experience doesn't match the scriptural message, our results will be weak.

Do what it says

The instructions that Paul gives to Timothy work. If you follow them, they will work for you. If you don't follow them, they won't work. This may seem obvious, but it's important.

We might be both spiritual and religious. But if we don't do what it says, we won't get the results. Others may be neither spiritual nor religious. But if they do these things, they'll get the results.

So, let's be practical. Compare your fundraising efforts against this passage. Can you check each box? Do you have each story element? Are you following the pattern? Are you following the instructions?

Doing this can be hard. It can require adjusting some old attitudes and opinions. It can mean doing things that other people don't understand. Let's face it: Effective ministry is hard work. This is no exception.

So, as we end this journey, let me share some practical advice. It's advice from James. He writes,

“But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.”
(James 1:22 NLT).

Do what it says. Do it, and you'll find that it works. The words are true. If you treat them like a recipe, you'll find that the recipe works. If you become a “doer” and not just a “hearer,” the results will be awesome!

¹ In fact, it's free! You can learn about the world of major gifts of assets and planned giving in the US system with free books and videos here:

<http://bit.ly/TexasTechProfessor> and

<https://www.encouragegenerosity.com/VPG.pdf>

² See Chapter 7 in *The Socratic Fundraiser: Using Questions to Advance the Donor's Story* for these steps.

<https://www.encouragegenerosity.com/TheSocraticFundraiser.pdf>

³ See examples in Rinehart, J. (2013). *Gospel patrons: People whose generosity changed the world*. Reclaimed Publishing.

⁴ See, e.g., asset donor stories in Acts 2:45; 4:34, 37; Matthew 26:7, and Mark 14:5.

⁵ Ahern, T., & Joyaux, S. P. (2011). *Keep your donors: The guide to better communications & stronger relationships*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 147.

⁶ Modified from the original, "What motivates/inspires you to make a charitable gift?" [Cadogan, E. & Skinner, K. (2016, October). *Transformational blended gifts: Shifting the organizational culture*. [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, Dallas, TX, p. 9.]

⁷ Fridman, N. (2021, May 26). *Why now is the perfect time to have a conversation about values, giving and your family's legacy* [PowerPoint slides]. Life and Legacy Annual Gathering, online. p. 18.

⁸ One experiment demonstrated a significant increase in interest in making a gift that resulted from adding the phrase "to support causes that have been important in your life" to the description of a charitable estate gift. [See James, R. N., III. (2016). Phrasing the charitable bequest inquiry. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 27(2), 998-1011.]

⁹ Eskin, J. (2019). *10 Simple Fundraising Lessons: A common sense guide to overcoming your fear of asking for gifts*. Eskin Fundraising Training, LLC. p. 39.

¹⁰ Stroman, M. K. (2014). *Asking about asking: Mastering the art of conversational fundraising* (2nd ed.). CharityChannel Press. p. 148; Green, F., Wagg, H. & Field, C. (2019). *You can't take it with you: The art and science of legacy fundraising*. Independently published. p. 106.

¹¹ "Party-time" enjoyable, *apolausin*, in 1 Timothy 6:17; hilariously joyful, *hilaron*, in 2 Corinthians 9:7; blessed or happy, *makarion*, in Acts 20:35. Ideal donors should be filled with abundant joy, which overflows in rich generosity in 2 Corinthians 8:2. Without the right emotion, without love, even the biggest gift is totally pointless for the donor in 1 Corinthians 13:3.

¹² See, Tumolo, J. (2016). *Simplify: A simple approach to building a sustainable planned giving program*. Independently published. p. 77; Davidson, P. J. (2012). *A planned giving plan of action: A three-year plan* [Paper presentation]. National Conference on Philanthropic Planning, New Orleans, LA. p. 1.

¹³ Lewzey, E. (2019). 4 powerful questions to ask your donors. [Website]. <https://www.blueskyphilanthropy.com/single-post/2019/05/15/4-powerfulquestions-to-ask-your-donors>

¹⁴ See, Advancement Resources. (2017, November 15). The power of the pause: Using silence in donor conversations [blog]. <https://advancementresources.org/the-power-of-the-pause-using-silence-in-donor-conversations/>; See also, "What would you want to do with your money that is

meaningful to you?” in Shaw-Hardy, S., Taylor, M. A., & Beaudoin-Schwartz, B. (2010). *Women and philanthropy: Boldly shaping a better world*. John Wiley & Sons. p. 115. (Quoting from Advancement Resources. (2006). *The art and science of donor development workbook*. Advancement Resources, LLC.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Russell James III, J.D., Ph.D., CFP® is a professor at Texas Tech University where he directs the graduate program in Charitable Financial Planning (planned giving).

His Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Missouri was titled “Sects, rationality, and human capital in religious charitable giving.” He also earned a J.D., *cum laude* from the University of Missouri School of Law, where he was a member of the Missouri Law Review and received the United Missouri Bank Award for Most Outstanding Work in Gift and Estate Taxation and Planning.

At Central Christian College of the Bible, he studied Greek and Hebrew under Professor Larry Pechawer, and Bible under Professors Gareth Reese, Lloyd Pelfrey, Bob Stacy, Michael Curtice, and Richard Koffarnus. He was ordained into the ministry by the Union Avenue Christian Church, Moberly, Missouri.

Dr. James was a faculty member at Central Christian College of the Bible from 1994-2005. He also served as a planned giving fundraiser for 5 years and later as president of the college for more than 5 years. During his presidency, the college successfully completed two major capital campaigns, built several new debt-free buildings, and more than tripled on-campus enrollment.

Dr. James has published over 80 peer-reviewed articles in academic journals in fields including religion, economics, sociology, nonprofit management, community development, neuroscience, and law. His Ph.D. student advisees have accepted faculty positions at the U. of Missouri, U. of Alabama,

U. of Utah, Kansas State U., Eastern New Mexico State U., Campbellsville U., Shepherd U., St. Joseph's U., and others. He has been quoted on charitable and financial issues in a variety of news sources including *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN*, *MSNBC*, *CNBC*, *ABC News*, *US News & World Report*, *USA Today*, *the Associated Press*, *Bloomberg News*, and the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

His other books include:

The Biblical Fundraiser in Ancient Words: The Historical Ministry of Major Gifts Fundraising

Joyful Wealth Management: A Bible Study Discussion Guide

The Socratic Fundraiser: Using Questions to Advance the Donor's Story

The Storytelling Fundraiser: The Brain, Behavioral Economics, and Fundraising Story

The Epic Fundraiser: Myth, Psychology, and the Universal Hero Story in Fundraising

The Primal Fundraiser: Game Theory and the Natural Origins of Effective Fundraising

Visual Planned Giving: An Introduction to the Law & Taxation of Charitable Gift Planning

Inside the Mind of the Bequest Donor: A Visual Presentation of the Neuroscience and Psychology of Effective Planned Giving Communication

Website: www.EncourageGenerosity.com

LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/in/encouragegenerosity/

Email: EncourageGenerosity@gmail.com

Twitter @GenerosityProf

For links to videos, slide presentations, and papers, please connect on LinkedIn.