

An Introduction to Ministry Partner Development

One of the opportunities you have as you prepare to go on a Project, is that of building a team of ministry partners. However daunting raising your support may seem, the key is to remember that God is more than equal to the task. As you trust in Him, you can look forward to His provision and direction each step of your faith adventure.

To help you with some of the essentials of building your team, several resources have been put together for you (links to Google docs available November 1, 2013). In addition, a P2C staff member will connect with you to answer any questions you have and coach you through the support team development process.

The following Bible study is a great starting point towards gaining some further insights into the concept of raising support.

Biblical Motivation for Raising Support

Your choosing to go on a Project has no doubt been a major decision. As with any life decision, you may still feel some uncertainty. However, yours has been a step of faith, not a rash leap into the unknown. You have trusted God's leading. Therefore, you can expect His wisdom and provision as you prepare to serve Him.

The goal of this study is to help you:

- feel confident that going on a Project is one the most strategic ways you can spend your summer.
- discover the biblical foundation for raising project sponsorship funds.
- be able to answer questions and objections most often raised about fund raising.

So get your Bible, set aside 15 - 20 minutes and discover what God has to say about the decision you have made.

Did God Change His Missions Budget in the New Testament?

After Christ came, God established a new covenant whereby any believer, (not just those in the family of Levi), could serve Him in vocational ministry. Jesus, who was a carpenter, could have funded His ministry by building furniture or repairing carts and tables full-time, then teaching and healing in His spare time. But that's not the example He left those He calls to vocational service.

As Jesus and His disciples went out ministering full-time, they relied on many people "...who were contributing to their support out of their private means." (Luke 8:3, NASB). So, Jesus and His disciples had financial supporters.

Furthermore, when Christ commissioned His followers "to go to every city and place," He gave them the spiritual authority to minister and told them to trust Him for their physical provisions.

"Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for *your* journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support. (Matthew 10:9,10). They

were to accept gifts from others, as Jesus said, "...eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages" (Luke 10:4-7).

A laborer in God's kingdom is truly worthy of being paid for his service. The workers in the early church lived on the same system of support that God established for the Levites. And the apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 9:14, "So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel." making the point that God set up a system of financial support for His workers.

But Paul wanted to make sure that the Corinthians to whom he preached had no reason to question his motives. He chose to live on a smaller salary and take less from the Corinthians in order to validate his character, his faith and his ministry. Though Paul may have supplemented his income by sewing canvas while in Corinth, he nevertheless did rely on gifts from supporters. Many times in the New Testament (Philippians 4:10- 16; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5) we see that the churches gave sacrificially to support Paul's work. He commended them for their support and reminded them of the eternal profit of their gifts. "Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. (Philippians 4:17).

This great missionary willingly received financial support from other Christians and churches, and he also asked for their support. "Whenever I go to Spain—for I hope to see you in passing, and to be helped on my way there by you..." (Romans 15:24). John also made reference to support: "For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth" (3 John 7,8).

In examining Scripture it is clear that Paul was a support-raising missionary and his part-time job in Corinth was a special exception to God's financial plan for His full-time workers. The lifestyle of supported ministry that he was called to was little different than the models followed by both Levites of the Old Testament and Jesus Himself.

Who Came Up with This Support Raising Idea Anyway?

Nearly 3,300 years ago, God designed a comprehensive financial plan that would adequately provide the salaries and benefits of His full-time workers. In the book of Numbers, God called the Levites to be His first full-time ministers. There were plenty of qualified and motivated laymen (i.e. Moses, Joshua, Caleb) to work in the tabernacle, but God was looking for more than part-time help and summer lifeguards. He wanted to meet the demanding spiritual needs of the nation, and even the most dedicated workers could not possibly meet these needs, in their spare time alone.

So God created a position for vocational ministers in His kingdom, and these first full-time workers, the Levites, were instructed to rely on God for their income and financial stability. The Lord tells Aaron in Numbers 18:20, 21 "I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel. To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform..." (See also Deuteronomy 18:1,2.).

The Lord staked His credibility on providing financial security for His servants. While the nation of Israel worked the land and faced the financial uncertainties of drought, disease and famine, the Lord promised to provide for the Levites through the tithes and offerings of their countrymen.

In addition, when God set up His employee pay scale, His checking account was not overdrawn (Numbers 18:8-13). He demanded that His workers be well cared for and instructed the people to set aside the “most holy gifts” and “the best of the fresh wine and of the grain” for His ministers. The Israelites were charged with the responsibility of providing for the finances of the Levites, and they were to give of their best.

Salaried Position versus Support Raising Position

Raising support does not make you holier than other Christians. Many outstanding denominations and missions groups provide salaries for their missionaries and the Lord is honouring their ministries as well.

All Christians need to live by faith, (2 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 11:6), regardless of how they receive their paycheque. The bottom line though, is that you need to be willing, (without shrinking back), to do whatever the Lord asks you to do and to work wherever he is leading or you cease to be qualified for any missionary career, salaried or supported.

Most people find themselves a little uneasy as they approach the challenge of support raising. To depend upon others seems to go against our North American culture... especially for finances. But we should not rely on the world's view, or our own feelings, when it comes to God's Word on support for His full-time ministers.

The Bible strongly states that accepting support gifts is part of God's economy. Raising support is a matter of obedience, not feelings. If God calls you to a supported ministry position, then He will provide everything you need to fulfil your ministry (including emotional strength and perseverance). “...my God shall supply all your needs” (Philippians 4:19); “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

Developing a financial support team is a faith adventure and an opportunity to see God work in your life and the lives of those who will financially stand with you. It is also the best possible preparation for ministry, because asking people if they would like to know Christ is no easier than asking someone to support your ministry. Both require courage and humility. What are cultivated in support raising are the prerequisite virtues for a minister of the gospel.

Finally, remember God's promise to meet your needs and to bless those who give. The phrase “It is more blessed to give than to receive” is not a trite platitude, but the conviction of our Lord Jesus (Acts 20:35). God honours giving and promises to return His blessings a hundred-fold. In Malachi 3:10-12 God commands, “...test me now in this... if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.” Your supporters are not merely doing you a favour, but you are helping them to make investments which will return benefits to them now and throughout eternity.

For further study and consideration: Numbers 1:47- 54; Numbers 18; Deuteronomy 18:1-6; Luke 8:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9; Matthew 16:25; Luke 6:38; Jeremiah 29:11; John 15:16.