
GROWING GIVERS' HEARTS: TREATING FUNDRAISING AS MINISTRY

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Growing Givers' Hearts addresses the following question: "What would Christian fundraising look like if it were conducted as ministry"? To answer this question, Jeavons and Basinger give us a framework of their vision for Christian ministry. They proceed to elaborate on their framework with illustrations from their study of exemplary Christian fundraisers from different Christian denominations. Their intent is to demonstrate both how Christian fundraisers act and what Christian fundraising looks like when fundraising is treated as a ministry within Christian organizations.

The study, which was funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc., began with the authors' search for exemplary Christian fundraisers. This was defined as those whose fundraising was successful in terms of both spiritual and financial growth. Jeavons and Basinger are themselves experienced Christian fundraisers, leaders, and teachers. They weave together the results of this study, Scriptural sources of teachings about giving and asking, and their discussion of Christian fundraising history into a work that illustrates the implications of the issues raised when fundraising is approached as ministry.

Fitting this book into the literature is difficult because it attempts to *integrate* Christian leadership with fundraising without providing a substantive review of either. It is not, as the authors tell us, a how to book on fundraising. It does not purport to give *the* answer on what *Christian* fundraising should or could be. Instead, the reader is called to *reflect and act* scripturally and theologically within his or her own tradition on the practical implications of considering fundraising as the work of a Christian organization being in ministry. The authors address this book to leaders of Christian organizations and negotiate admirably the differences in language and thought among different Christian traditions, although they do not ignore the theological differences among Christians. In chapter six, they address such differences directly as part of

their framework: "An organization and its fundraising program must be clear about the essential theological tenets of its own tradition and how that tradition should shape the work of raising money" (100).

The book starts with brief discussions of theological and spiritual resources from church history and Scripture. The authors are not shy about criticizing fundraising techniques they consider inappropriate for Christians. These chapters could serve as the basis for a lively and instructive discussion among professional fundraisers, seminarily students, boards of directors, pastors, or any group of committed Christians.

The authors propose six essential characteristics of fundraising. I consider most of these characteristics to be perspectives or approaches that would make for a healthy ministry-based Christian organization. Their approach could be applied to other parts of practical ministry, to as they say, "integrate the theology of the organization with decisions made in the everyday course of business" (104). The book discusses implications of each characteristic in terms of fundraising.

The first two are Christian perspectives that distinguish Christian fundraising from secular fundraising, and, I suspect, will be challenging to many Christians. Having *confidence in God's abundance* is the first perspective. Approaching fundraising from this perspective has implications for the kinds of appeals that are made, for setting appropriate goals, and for appropriate communication about development programs. The second perspective is a *holistic perspective on Kingdom Work*. This involves eliminating the spirit of competition with other Christian organizations since each are doing a part of God's work and none can do all.

The third characteristic is *clarity about core theological belief*; It is here that the authors are speaking as much to the organization's leadership as they are to particular fundraisers. They envision theologically-driven organizations employing professionally competent, theologically-driven fundraisers who will grow theologically with other members of the organization. Such fundraisers would be able to "integrate the theology of the organization with decisions made in the everyday course of business" (104). In my opinion, the authors' vision calls Christian organizations to a high standard that will change not just the nature of fundraising, but also the very

nature of the organization. How many Christian organizations can truly say that the decisions they make in the everyday course of business are theologically-driven?

The fourth characteristic is *giving donors opportunities for participation*. Here, the authors go beyond the conventional fundraising literature to articulate a Christian approach. The fifth and sixth characteristics are *integrated organizational planning* and *spiritual (v mature leadership)*. Both of these go beyond fundraising to address both the Christian organization and its leadership. Good planning provides consistency, establishes limits, encourages accountability, and enables evaluation, all characteristics of an effective organization. Spiritually mature leadership does not separate professional life from secular life, but also does not unquestioningly accept fundraising just because it uses Christian images. Instead, fundraising practices are to be judged both professionally and religiously for their efficacy as tools and then integrated with Christian images and language.

This book is directed at leaders and fundraisers of Christian organizations who have some fundraising background or experience. However, I also recommend the book to Christian leaders, especially pastors, regardless of experience, who are uncertain, apprehensive, or ignorant about fundraising and their role in it. *Growing Givers' Hearts* challenges all involved in Christian fundraising to articulate and act in accordance with their theology in all aspects of fundraising, and to integrate their faith with their professional practice. It provides clear principles and examples on how to do this. Those who are not knowledgeable about fund raising will begin to *see* what their role is as a religious leader, what they have to learn, and what they need to consider in getting others to work with them, whether volunteers or paid staff. The book raises the question again and again, "If we are going to take our theology seriously when it comes to fundraising, what are the implications for practice"? This question could well be applied to other areas of Christian leadership practices as well.

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