

**THREE**

**CHARACTERISTICS**

**OF A**

**CHEERFUL**

**GIVER**

**ACS**Technologies®





heologian Henri Nouwen's transformational book, *The Spirituality of Fundraising*, has helped many of us reframe our approach to asking donors for money.

"From the perspective of the gospel, fund-raising is not a response to a crisis," he writes.

"Fund-raising is, first and foremost, a form of ministry. It is a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission."



For many churches, large and multi-campus congregations with large operating budgets in particular, fundraising can seem a very touchy subject.

Nouwen assures us that fundraising doesn't need to feel awkward, desperate, or intrusive. Fundraising is ministry, and Nouwen provides an important Biblical framework for understanding a donor's relationship to God and money, and perhaps as importantly, the spiritual role of the fundraiser. We, as those seeking funds, have to be confident in the many ways giving to our ministry will bless and enrich the giver.

He reminds us that we're providing an invitation to those with resources to fuel the restoration of all things and advance God's kingdom here on earth. That unifying of the asker and the giver is what Nouwen aptly names "conversion" - where unmet need is fulfilled in a unique coming together as part of God's missional call.

"Whether we are asking for money or giving money we are drawn together by God, who is about to do a new thing through our collaboration," Nouwen writes.

This is a sacred space of conversion - where donor and seeker unite. Using Nouwen's lens of spiritual fundraising, it becomes clear that what the Bible teaches us about generosity points to the very best practices that churches and ministries should have in place to steward donors.



# AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

**One defining characteristic of a cheerful giver is a desire for community - an authentic relationship with the ministry they are supporting.**

In churches, we often first have to reconcile that while God's concern is for the poor, our communities of faith also provide a way for those with wealth to participate in advancing His Kingdom.

Henri Nouwen puts it this way: "The poor are indeed held in the heart of God. We need to remember that the rich are held there too. I have met a number of wealthy people over the years. More and more, my experience is that rich people are also poor, but in other ways," he writes. *"Many rich people are very lonely. Many struggle with a sense of being used. Others suffer from feelings of rejection or depression. It may seem strange to say, but the rich need a lot of attention and care."*

Part of our role as Christians fundraising for the gospel is to help create community and authentic relationships between those who have resources and those who need them. That is ministry.

Donors feel best stewarded when they are part of a community and a goal much bigger than themselves. In Luke 21:1-4, Jesus compares the widow's mite to the rich man's gifts — demonstrating that the gifts of all are needed and used in God's economy. This is a well-known story — you've probably heard or read it many times — yet it never gets old for me as a fundraiser. In my world of working with donors and organizations raising needed funds, the most powerful moments are when I hear stories of sacrifice, whether big or small, in people's giving.

Donors who have hands-on experiences in ministry build an authentic relationship to the church and form a community. This can be a unique challenge in large or multi-campus churches, where hospitality for newcomers (and getting them connected quickly) is rightly a focus. We often see those larger churches taking their loyal donors and tithers for granted - not intentionally, but just not actively creating opportunities for those givers to see their impact and grow their giving passion.



# AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

CONT.

## How do churches create that space?

1

**Offer intentional opportunities for donors to experience the ministries they're supporting.**

2

**Ensure you're communicating and celebrating with donors what they've made possible.**

3

**Carve out the time to build communities among those donors. Thank you events, small group experiences, vision trips or tailored missional experiences all can be targeted to the needs of specific groups of donors and prospects.**

In today's culture, most generous donors want to give of more than just their financial resources. This is especially true of younger givers. They want to get their feet on the ground with the causes they're supporting. They want to get their hands dirty. Donors who are also volunteers are more passionate and better advocates than those who only give of their financial gifts.

Cultivate authentic communities where cheerful givers are assured they are fueling God's mission in the world.

"I wonder how many churches and charitable organizations realize that community is one of the greatest gifts they have to offer. If we ask for money, it means that we offer a new fellowship, a new brotherhood, a new sisterhood, a new way of belonging," Nouwen writes.



# BUILDING THE KINGDOM

**What sets a cheerful giver apart from the usual donor?**

**One of those characteristics is a passion to participate in building the Kingdom through their resources.**

Unfortunately, most churches do a less than stellar job in meeting this need for donors. It's a tough truth that I've discovered through several decades of fundraising work.

The Biblical call to tithe and to give our first 10 percent to the Kingdom work too often has led churches to take those members for granted. We're rightly focused on ministry and congregational care, and we comparatively put very little planning and thought into caring for those actually funding our work. Outside of an annual stewardship campaign, we're on autopilot and counting on the loyalty of tithers with little focus on turning them into passionate donors.

When your members are at a social gathering and asked about the philanthropic causes they support, is the church at the top of the organizations they'll list? If we're honest, we know the answer is probably not. I often hear major donors talk about the animal shelter or child sponsor program they support, the campaign to give clean water to a nation in need, and "...oh, and of course, I give to my church" - the afterthought.

As the church, we must do a better job demonstrating for givers how they are advancing the Kingdom through their faithful support. Henri Nouwen insists that "fundraising is a very rich and beautiful activity. It is a confident, joyful, and hope-filled expression of ministry. In ministering to each other, each from the riches that he or she possesses, we work together for the full coming of God's Kingdom."

A little boy offered Jesus his meager lunch in Matthew 14:14-21. He only had a few loaves and fishes, and Jesus had 5,000 mouths to feed. But gifts in God's hands can be — and often are — divinely multiplied to meet the demands of greater works. This is one of the greatest-ever giving stories, a beautiful picture of the faith to see something profound happen because of your gifts, however humble they might be.



# BUILDING THE KINGDOM

CONT.

First and foremost, the young man had enough faith to give his own lunch away! He was risking his own provision, his own comfort, in the hope of helping others. One boy's faith is what set in motion the amazing miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000.

Cheerful givers donate to see the impossible become possible. It happens inside and outside the walls of our churches each day, and yet, we don't often say thank you or tell our loyal donors what their gifts have done to transform lives.

Take the time to regularly brainstorm with your church's staff about the ministry stories from the past week or month. Which ones would make great features in your communications or social media? Which ones could serve as the centerpiece of a thank you letter to your loyal tithers?

It's important in a large or multi-campus church to hold the tension between the "main" campus and

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"satellite" campuses by being intentional and strategic in communicating donor impact. Depending on your culture, some of that may be solved by segmenting your communications: decide when to leverage the campus pastor's communications to that segment of donors and when to celebrate donor impact and projects across all your locations.

Plan at least one "unexpected" thanks to your donors this year - whether it's a phone call, email, handwritten card, or a letter, thank them individually for what they are doing to further God's mission through your church.

"So if we ask for money from people who have money, we have to love them deeply," Nouwen writes. "We do not need to worry about the money. Rather, we need to worry about whether, through the invitation we offer them and the relationship we develop with them, they will come closer to God."

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# DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

**Donors need relationship and ministry far more than we need their money.**

If we don't see ministry to the donor as our higher calling, our donors are destined to be mere objects and the connection between them and our ministry will be sadly unsatisfying.

Very early in my career, I was tasked with raising what seemed like an insurmountable amount of money for a ministry without a large donor base. As a young and inexperienced development rep, I tackled it head on, filling my calendar with appointments and firing asks at anyone I could corner: "Can you give a thousand dollars? Can you give a thousand dollars?" I was functioning like a desperate man with a gun!

At the end of the campaign, I sat exhausted. I had hit the dollar goal, but it was utterly unsatisfying for me and for those who contributed. I'd brought nothing to them, and their connection to the ministry was transactional at best.

To cultivate cheerful givers in our churches, we have to be committed to demonstrating their impact.

A donor may give a gift in response to a request like mine, but without a passion for that ministry, he or she will soon find a way to avoid future requests. Follow the trail of a donor's money over time, and you'll find the real object of their passion. When you demonstrate care for givers and are consistently demonstrating the impact of their giving, it's almost inevitable that those donors will grow more committed to your ministry.

Donors of all sizes deserve to know the difference they are making. Henri Nouwen reminds us that fundraising is all about creating a relationship between those who have resources and those who need them, in order to advance God's Kingdom.

"We will find ourselves begging for money and they will find themselves merely handing us a check," he writes. "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."



# DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

CONT.

Churches can demonstrate the impact of givers' investments in their ministry in meaningful and creative ways. While the impact of some gifts is easier to quantify than others, donors shouldn't feel like their weekly or monthly gifts are going to the operational 'blackhole' of the church. Look carefully at each section of your budget and tie those expenses to your mission. How many gifts or donors does it take to keep the lights on? To maintain your website or broadcast your service online? To support the staff or replace equipment in your nursery? To repair the roof?

If you are in a multi-campus church setting, ask your campus pastors to undertake the same exercise with their campus budget and staff. The hard truth is that none of our ministries would be possible without the generosity of our donors, so take the time to dig into how their gifts propel God's Kingdom each week. Doing that work to translate giving to direct impact also gives you "handles" for donors who might increase their tithe or commitment if they knew what a certain level of gift helps accomplish.

As Nouwen wisely counseled, "If we raise funds for the creation of a community of love, we are helping God build the Kingdom. We are doing exactly what we are supposed to do as Christians."

**It can't be transactional: Nurture cheerful givers by helping them see the good they are doing day in and day out for your church and its ministries.**



# Choosing the Right Ministry Partner

## **The know-how you need from experts you trust.**

ACS Technologies is the original pioneer of Church Management Software (ChMS). We are firmly dedicated to serving local churches all over North America by providing the best-in-class ministry software and service solutions that help you fulfill Christ's mission for your Church.

## **Tools and support to strengthen churches.**

We build great software, but we don't stop there. We have a "service-first" approach that truly sets us apart. With hundreds of dedicated support and consulting personnel, your staff can reach our team 24/7. We're in your corner to help you with the ministry challenges you face every day.

## **Ideas and solutions powered by integrity.**

Integrity is real for us, and it means consistently being faithful stewards by doing the right thing for church success. We have earned the trust of pastors, church staff, congregants, our employees, and colleagues for over 40 years.

## **A plan to meet your needs and move your ministry.**


We're not just interested in satisfied customers. We see ourselves as your real ministry partner and will work with you to make disciples that will last for an eternity. We're excited to talk about your goals, create a plan together, and set you up with the software, service, and resources you need.

## **We believe in YOU!**


ACS Technologies believes in the local church. Over 75% of our team has experience serving in their local churches. We know firsthand that serving the Church means serving people, and we take seriously our commitment to helping ministries like yours achieve their God-given mandate - to make disciples in their communities, states, and across the world.

## Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

 **1-844-467-3256**

 **[solutions@acst.com](mailto:solutions@acst.com)**

 **180 Dunbarton Dr, Florence, SC 29501**