



# Biblical Foundations

## Fundraising in the Bible

---

*The LORD said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.*

— Exodus 25:1-9 (NIV)



When you hear “fundraising,” what comes to mind?

There are many different opinions and ideas about fundraising. Some people think it’s great. Others aren’t so sure. And then there are those who view it simply as a means to an end. What do you think?

There are some, even among Christians, who see fundraising as a necessary evil. The thinking is that the organization is doing important work; they need money to do the work, so someone has to raise the money to make it happen. The ministry is what’s important; the fundraising is just a practical way to find the resources to carry out ministry. It’s something that has to be done.



In Exodus 25, we read that God conducted His own fundraising campaign. When God instructed the Israelites to build a tabernacle, He invited the people to donate to the cause. We can learn several important lessons from this account.

### **God doesn't need our money.**

Obviously, God doesn't need our money to accomplish His purposes. And He doesn't need us. God is the creator and owner of all things. He has infinite resources at His disposal. So inviting the people to give was not a matter of dire need. It had to be about something else. Consider the resources needed to provide food, water, and clothing to tens of thousands (perhaps millions) of Israelites for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness. There was no fundraising involved. God was able to provide—and in that instance, He did.

### **God wants our involvement.**

God can accomplish His work by Himself. But sometimes, He chooses to work differently. Sometimes He invites us into the process. The fact that He invites us means He wants us to be involved with Him in His work. This is an exciting privilege that provides an opportunity to engage with God. It also allows us to engage with God's people who share similar interests, values, and goals. Exciting things are taking place. We don't have to sit in the stands and watch the action. We are invited to get on the field and participate!

### **Giving is voluntary.**

God told Moses, "You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give." He chose to make it voluntary rather than a matter of duty. This principle is echoed in the familiar New Testament passage in which Paul told the Corinthians, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). Giving out of choice rather than out of duty is a much more cheerful experience, and that is what God intended.



## **Giving is sometimes sacrificial.**

When God invited the people to give, He invited them to give big. Notice some of the items He asked for: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet yarn; fine linen; goat hair; ram skins; durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil; spices; and onyx stones and other gems. These were not cheap! They were precious items that would be given at great cost. God knew that such gifts would go a long way toward accomplishing the goal of building and furnishing the tabernacle. He also knew that they would go a long way toward engaging the people in a meaningful way.

## **There was a lofty objective.**

Building a tabernacle was a worthwhile pursuit. The objective was to create something that would point others to God and glorify Him. The tabernacle was a physical, visible representation of Jehovah dwelling in the midst of His people; various aspects of the tabernacle pointed to God's attributes. The pillars of cloud and fire that hung over the tabernacle were stunning displays, inspiring awe among the Israelites as well as among the Gentile nations. A big, holy, audacious goal can encourage and energize many to participate.

## **There were amazing rewards.**

God can accomplish His purposes without our involvement. But by inviting us in, He allows us to enjoy the rewards of giving:

- The privilege of engaging with God in His work.
- The joy of partnering with God's people.
- A sense of ownership, knowing that "We did this!"
- The satisfaction of giving sacrificially to something we know is important and meaningful.
- The excitement of being part of something big.
- The delight in seeing God lifted up and glorified.



Dr. Henry Rosso, the founder of the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, defined fundraising as “the gentle art of teaching the joy of giving.” Fundraising is not a necessary evil or merely a means to an end. Fundraising is God’s idea. And it is intended to bless the giver.

Care to join us?