



## Show me the Money! Helps on Support Raising for Church Planting

Tanner Turley, Lead Pastor

### Theological Foundations

- God is sovereign and faithful to build his church (Mt 16:18; Lam 3:23).
- God is infinite in his kindness and loves to provide from his resources (Ps 50:10, 145:17; Phil. 4:19).
- Church planting is a walk of faith (2 Cor 5:7).
- God uses fundraising in the life of a church planter and/or church planting team for their sanctification (e.g. sanctified view of money, needs, giving, and generosity). Bill Hybels says, “Funding ministry proves the character of a leader like no other challenge.”
- Church planters should approach support raising with a kingdom mindset. Other planters will reap from the work that you put in, partnering churches will be blessed, and future missionaries may be called from mission teams that visit your plant.

### A Dozen or So Thoughts on Raising Support

(Titled in honor of Alvin Plantinga's Two Dozen or So Theistic Arguments)

By Reid S. Monaghan, Lead Pastor of Jacob's Well in North Brunswick, NJ

Everyone loves fundraising. Most people wish they could do nothing but dial for dollars day after day. Well, maybe not everyone loves the process of raising money. Yet, funding your church plant is an extremely important part of the journey as it gives fuel to the mission to which God has called. Furthermore, being well funded allows the planter to have a singular focus on mission and ministry. There are many models of funding a lead planter in his mission. Many effectively pursue a bi-vocational pathway, some raise full support, some are funded by mother churches or denominations, and most do a little of all the above. What follows are twelve thoughts to help you develop a financial support base through simple letter writing strategy and ministry partner development.

1. Namestorm/Network – List out everyone you can think of everyone. People in ministry networks, people from past ministry connections, friends from churches, churches you have been a member of (mission committees etc), business connections etc. Write down everyone and build a wide open list. Gather addresses and contact information. Additionally, if you have opportunities to cast vision or speak with large groups of people (churches, clubs, etc.) make sure you provide a sign up sheet or some other mechanism to get contact information for interested people. You will want to be able to send them more information and follow back up with them. Some guys do foundations and grant writing; I have not, but I know some see some success there.

2. Present Well – Put some information together in a winsome format. Do not skimp here as shoddy information pieces might communicate that you have a shoddy vision. We created a vision/funding brochure, a DVD and a vision web site. If you have friends that have design or video skills ask them to help you create these pieces. If you do not have access to people who can help, you may need to spend some money here. Once you have created your materials, write a clear cover letter, create response forms and return envelopes. It is important that both you and your communication pieces effectively cast vision for your church plant. What is the need? What are you called to do? How will you connect this vision and calling to your potential ministry partner? How will you present it? Visually, with stories, testimony, statistics, demographics, endorsements from Christian leaders? As you develop these materials run your content by others and solicit feedback from those who have done it before. Be humble and make necessary changes but this must be the vision you sense from God as you will be communicating it to potential partners...not to mention in the next X amount of years living out that vision.

3. Personalize and Mail – Send it out to the people on your list. Make a personal note on each letter a few hours spent here may get your letter read among all the other mail people receive.



4. LISTEN UP!!! – This is absolutely only a first step. The goal in the letter is actually to make a first touch with a potential ministry partner. Do not expect the letter and your materials to do all the work for you. The people who know you well and already believe in God's calling on your life may respond and team up with you right away, but you will more than likely need to follow up these people and develop the partnership.

5. Follow Up – Follow up with a personal time to cast vision/ask for partnership. I find this has been the order that works best. 1) In person if I can sit down with a person to share what God is doing I make the time to do it. Your vision will come through best through you. 2) Actual phone calls if you cannot meet in person a phone call is the next best. 3) E-mail follow-up using good writing skills an e-mail follow up can be a good way to set up an in person meeting or phone appointment. E-mail has become more and more acceptable and normal way to transact just about every sort of correspondence. I have used E-mail in fund raising more than ever but it still doesn't replace meeting with someone in person. 4) Facebook stalking multiple wall postings, app invitations and messages on Facebook might be obnoxious. Just kidding. I find the better you know the person the more impersonal the communication can be. Bottom line: anytime you can be with someone in person - DO IT. One more thing - tell your potential partners what you need. We asked for prayer, finances and friendship. We asked for their support for a specified time period (3-5 years) and presented a time frame for which we hope our church to be locally funded from the congregation.

6. Referrals – Ask for contacts/referrals from trusted partners. If someone can give you names of other people who may share your vision this is a great help to you...especially if they might vouch for you. This becomes more important after you work through your first round of contacts. If others will advocate for you or put in a first call this is extremely helpful. Some people may host a dinner or dessert in their home to allow you cast your vision for their friends. These events are helpful but make sure you get everyone's information so you can follow back up with those interested. Enlisting your current partners in the process is helpful as they are already convinced of your call let them help you connect with more people.

7. PRAY – Pray hard, work hard...then pray more fundraising in the flesh cannot please God. If you find yourself discouraged revisit God's call upon your life and the biblical basis for fund raising:

- Paul urged the church at Corinth to give financially (2 Cor. 8, 9)
- Paul thanked the Philippians for their support of his ministry, knowing that they would benefit by giving (Phil. 4:17) and that God would supply their needs according to His riches (Phil. 4:19)
- Jesus taught His followers to seek God and His kingdom first and material needs would be provided. Don't lose focus upon Jesus we want to seek his face, not simply his hand (Matt. 6:33)
- God's plan is to provide support for his work through Christians who give of their resources (Matt. 10:10; 3 John 5-8)
- God even provided for Nehemiah's work and mission to Jerusalem through a pagan king (Nehemiah 1,2)

8. Stay on Top of Things – Keep good records and stay organized to help yourself remain diligent in follow up. I use software called TNT Mpd that a Campus Crusade for Christ staff member wrote. It is great stuff as it helps plan tasks, follow-up with partners, track progress towards goals and gives you great flexibility. Two thumbs up you can download here: <http://www.tntware.com/tntmpd/>

9. Schedule the Time – Fund raising can be time intensive so schedule it in. With a typical partner you have to get an appointment, set up an appointment, have the meeting, follow up with a person about their commitment, follow up to get the checks started etc. I have found that it can take upwards of a dozen touches with a person/family as they come on your team.

10. Communicate Regularly – I send something out to our partners once a month. In this season of



ministry we are doing this all electronically which is working well...I didn't want to go back to stamps and paper newsletters. I led people towards this expectation as well during the process of bringing them on our support team. Remember to value your friends and partners and see them as co-laborers in the gospel. They are not simply your funding source; they are partners in the gift of life and the mission of the gospel. Treasure them this way.

11. Automate – If you or your sending church is set up to receive recurring online donations - DO IT. Even if it costs money if a supporter misses just one month it can be substantial. If someone was giving 50 bucks a month through auto bank draft you might get dinged 1.50 with fees per gift. That might be 18 bucks a year. If they just miss one check mailed in, you have more than made up for it. Additionally, Google Checkout has very small overhead for non Profits which you can use to receive donations.

12. Use Wisdom – You don't want to be an over eager fund stalker, nor do you want to assume that you are a person's #1 top priority in life that they are thinking about daily. You will need to follow up regularly with people - for appointments, to "get the check in the mail" etc. Pray to space that well with wisdom in the relationship. Many have intentions but just need reminders and usually appreciate your follow up unless of course you call everyday at 7pm when they are putting their kids to bed. Then they just want to stomp the yard with your head. Not good. Ask God for wisdom on how often and how frequently to reconnect with a person. One last note. Do not be afraid of the word NO. Sometimes we can allow things to persist in ambiguity way too long. It is not a sin to ask someone to be clear on whether they can help your church plant at this time. A firm no can get you moving on to other partners. Remember that many people will pray for you even if they cannot give at this time. Keep them on your newsletter list as God may use their prayers to accomplish your mission. Additionally, they may be able to help financially at a later time.

We hope this is helpful to you on your support raising journey. The diligence, perseverance and follow up used in developing a team of ministry partners are similar skills you will use in networking and evangelism in planting God's place of testing and trust in Jesus to work in and through you for his glory. Life has many mountains and many crucibles ordained by our good God and he will walk with you towards the funding of his church. One final note is in order. Simply because you are raising support does not mean you cannot be generous and help others along the way. The practice of generosity in every season is foundational to joy in God you never know how you might encourage someone else along the way.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.  
Proverbs 3:5-8 (ESV)

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### **Additional Thoughts and Tips for Support Raising (Tanner)**

1. Prayer!! Build your prayer support base and begin communicating with them. Many of them will become financial supporters. For effective communication utilize a service like Mail Chimp ([www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)). Raise funds by going after partners who do more than give by taking a holistic approach (pray, send/give, go). Communicate that partnership is about more than money.
2. Explore and exhaust all possible avenues of support (Sending Church, Partnering Churches, Denominational Support, Individuals, Businesses, People who have a heart for your area, etc.). Make fundraising a team effort. Every core group member should contribute. Enlist the help of people in your sending church. Utilize leaders in your life



who have connections, networks of church planters, friends in ministry. People give to vision, but they also give to those they know and trust or people who are close to people they know and trust.

3. In order to communicate well, be resourceful. Find someone who excels in graphic design and recruit their help.
4. Search out different opportunities to vision cast and “tell your story” through informational meetings, church services, Sunday school classes, etc. People give to vision. Focus more on the mission than on needs. Get in front of people, be prepared, build rapport, talk about the greatness of God, exude confidence in God (not yourself), communicate the privilege of being a part of the mission of God.
5. At times, it is wise to highlight a specific set of needs or a specific initiative. People also give when they know they are accomplishing something specific (e.g. – evangelistic materials, Bibles, the final \$10k to get a staff person on the field, etc.).
6. Don’t get frustrated. Persevere when pastors and missions pastors will not email or call you back (even when they say they will). Trust God when churches do not have the desire or the resources to support your efforts. Preach to yourself when you get discouraged. “God has all of the resources in his hands.” “He will supply all of our needs according to his riches in Christ” “He will build his church.” “God is seldom early, but he is never late.”
7. Communicate your gratitude in a professional and timely manner.
8. Have a plan for progressing toward self-supporting status and communicate that to potential supporters. Also provide your vision and tentative ministry timeline for them.
9. Expect the Unexpected. God will humble you and surprise you through this process, but it is a joy watching how he provides and builds his church.