

Our Balanced Attack

*How Nazarenes Finance
World Evangelism*

by
HOWARD CULBERTSON



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Football and Missions Giving

If I'm in my car on an autumn Saturday afternoon, I'll turn on the radio and hunt for a football game broadcast. It's a habit I developed growing up in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma is a football-crazy state. It doesn't have a professional football team. No matter. The University of Oklahoma regularly wins its conference championship. They've been crowned national champions several times. Not long ago, a player from Oklahoma State University, Barry Sanders, won the Heisman trophy given each year to the best college football player in the United States. Teams from Oklahoma universities often play in postseason bowl games.

Because of where I grew up, I caught football fever. I spent autumn Saturday afternoons listening to the Oklahoma Sooner Football Network. I dreamed about being a great football player. Alas, I never did play on a school team. The only time I got out of the bleachers and onto a playing field was playing my trumpet in the band. Along the way, I did play a lot of sandlot football. Of course, my dream of being a great player was unrealistic. Usually I was

the shortest kid on the playground. Without question I was the skinniest. So they always chose me last. Still, whether as a player or a spectator, I have always loved football. I'm from Oklahoma, and Oklahoma is a football-crazy state.

There are some important things you should know about football. One is that you don't win championships depending on a single player. You've got to have a balanced attack. That means using the skills of a variety of players. Consistent winning takes a team effort. "Balanced attack" also refers to the way you play the game. Football teams don't win game after game by throwing passes on every play. They will not win by always running the ball. Winners balance their offense with a mix of running and passing plays. A real championship team will be further balanced by having a top defensive strategy.

What does all this have to do with missions? Well, let me first give an example of a missions program that tried to operate without a balanced attack. Not long ago a well-known American televangelist confessed to grievous moral lapses. At the height of his glory, money flowed toward him like iron filings attracted to a magnet. With some of that money he bankrolled most of his denomination's mission work in Haiti. Among the things he paid for were hot lunches in 100 elementary schools. Then, one Sunday evening on television he confessed to immorality.

By Monday morning a full-blown scandal had erupted around him. He seemed briefly contrite. Then he plunged ahead, using everything sent in by faithful supporters to keep his headquarters open (and personal airplane flying). Anticipating that donations would fall off after his confession, he called Haiti that first week to shut down the lunch programs. On payday two weeks later Haitian teachers in "his" schools got empty envelopes. We had missionary friends supported directly by this television preacher. Their total reliance on his money brought their work crashing to a halt. Within days after the scandal broke, these missionaries packed up to go home. Without his financial sup-

port their ministry had collapsed like a football team who had depended too much on one star player who breaks his leg.

Nazarene missionaries are different. The funds for our global ministries are raised in several different ways. For me, football's balanced attack makes a great illustration of how Nazarenes look for resources to fulfill Christ's Great Commission. We Nazarenes don't depend on one person giving all the money. We use several different fund-raising avenues. We appeal to the young and old, to the rich and poor. Sometimes we appeal to the emotions, sometimes to a rational sense of careful stewardship.

The results are impressive. Flying in the face of the selfish materialism gripping much of our world, Nazarenes give more money for missions than many larger denominations. As a result, we have more missionaries than the United Methodist church, a denomination with 10 times our membership.

The longer I'm involved in Nazarene missions outreach, the more convinced I become of the soundness of our balanced fund-raising strategy. What is so special about it? Well, to begin with, ongoing expenses like missionary salaries and hospital supplies are underwritten by a budget system. This budget—our General Budget—provides continuity for our missions outreach. Through economic boom and bust, through the poundings Satan may give us, we'll be fulfilling our divine mandate, thanks to General Budget. To balance out a rather mundane-sounding budget system, some of our other fund-raising ventures encourage spontaneity, appealing to the emotions. These include offerings to open new countries, to buy horses for rural pastors, to help disaster victims, and to build buildings.

Aided by funds raised through our balanced attack, we Nazarenes have been able to move through lots of doors God has opened in front of us. We've planted districts of thriving holiness churches on six continents. In 1983 we celebrated 75 years as a denomination. That year we urged churches to

overpay their General Budget share. Those overpayments helped us enter several countries: Burma, the Azores, Kenya, Suriname, and Botswana. Adding these to the list of areas already penetrated gave us a total of 74 world areas, just one short of our diamond anniversary goal of 75 (one world area for each year since the 1908 Pilot Point merger).

Now, less than a decade later, we're in more than 95 world areas. Fueling such global outreach is a diversified fund-raising system combining the best of emotional spontaneity with long-term commitment. That's what this book is about: a balanced attack combining an underwritten budget topped by special appeals and other resources.

Budget: A Bad Word Doing Good Things

Staring at ripening wheat fields in western Oklahoma years ago, I couldn't imagine how that grain was going to be harvested. Those fields stretched to the horizon and beyond. "Amber waves of grain," I said softly. That phrase from Katherine Bates's "America, the Beautiful" described perfectly what I saw. Before writing those words, she must have seen what I was looking at.

How are they going to harvest it all? I wondered. I'd seen only an occasional combine sitting beside the farmers' barns. It didn't seem like nearly enough machinery to harvest those huge fields.

Then, one day on the road I passed a convoy of combines and trucks filled with harvesting crews. Someone explained that these were custom harvesters, mobile crews that start in south Texas as soon as the wheat ripens there. Stripping wheat fields county by county, they work their way northward.

There was my answer. Rather than every farmer having to bankrupt himself by buying expensive equipment that will lie idle most of the year, farmers all over the cen-