

GIVING  
DEBTORS TO EVERY PERSON  
THAT  
*Transforms*

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# CONTENTS

<i>Introduction: Let's Talk About Money</i>	7
1. Because You Give	13
2. WEF: Mission Critical Funding	24
3. Three Key Players: WMB, Missionary Care/ LINKS, and Alabaster	37
4. Work & Witness: It's Not About the Money	49
5. A Potpourri of Giving Opportunities	60
6. How the Money Gets Raised and Disbursed	74
<i>Call to Action: Where Is Your Treasure?</i>	89
<i>Pronunciation Guide</i>	95

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Let's Talk About Money**

Let's be clear. This book is going to be about giving money for world evangelism. At the same time, it needs to be clear that, by itself, money will not complete the Great Commission. Money does not bring people into the Kingdom. To complete Christ's command in Matthew 28:19-20 requires that sanctified, missional people with the Holy Spirit working through them get involved.

Even so, we cannot get around the fact that deploying missionaries and guiding young national churches to full partnership takes some money. Barbara and I knew that, because we were Nazarene missionaries for fifteen years. Faithful giving to missions supported us when we were in Italy and Haiti, making it possible for us to mentor rising leaders and help them in evangelism and discipleship ministries. Missions money made it possible to feed hungry children, provide medical care for sick people, and to preach the Good News to the poor (Luke 7:22).

Therefore, while money alone will not get the job done, it must be said that the job cannot be done without money. That is the reason giving for world evangelism is one core value—or objective—of Nazarene Missions International (NMI); the other core objectives being praying, discipling future mission leaders, and providing education.

To be sure, people sometimes say that money is a touchy thing to talk about. Maybe it is, but Jesus talked a lot about money. He mentioned it more than once in the Sermon on the Mount. He had a conversation with Zacchaeus about money. As Jesus was sending out the Twelve, he gave them instructions regarding money. He talked about it in His parables. He compared a widow's temple offering to what the well-to-do were giving. He discussed money with a rich young ruler. Jesus even answered a question about paying taxes. So, if we want to faithfully pass our Lord's teachings on to others, aren't we obliged to talk about money?

Being asked to give of our financial resources should not surprise us. Genesis 1:27 declares that we are made in God's image. I take that to mean that we should reflect Him. The Bible uses "give" in relation to God at least 160 times. If we truly reflect Him, won't we be known as generous givers? Indeed,

2 Corinthians 9:7 (CEV) declares: "God loves people who love to give." By the way, Paul wrote those words as he concluded an appeal to Corinthian Christians to give to a compassionate ministry offering.

The "perfect love" that is so central to God's will for His people motivates giving to meet spiritual, emotional, and physical needs and to seek justice and to care for the marginalized. We are a missional people, and because of scripture's call to proclaim the Good News to the whole world, we freely donate for world evangelism. We could, of course, dream up some scenarios in which Gospel proclamation could be done without any human involvement. That was essentially what some British pastors said to William Carey in the late 1700s. As they tried to discourage Carey from becoming a missionary, they told him, "When God chooses to save the heathen, He will do so without your help or ours."

Those pastors were wrong. God chose to use human instruments to make Christlike disciples in the nations, which is another way of saying "go and save the heathen." Calling on believers to support those doing missionary work follows a pattern set by the apostle Paul. As he wrote to believers in Rome, Paul said, "When I go to Spain, I hope to visit you . . . and

to have you assist me on my journey there" (Romans 15:24).

Paul knew how to make tents, and he used that trade to support some of his missionary work (Acts 18:3, 1 Corinthians 9:6, 12). Because of that, missionaries today who earn their living from secular employment are called "tentmakers." Still, in whatever measure Paul supplied his monetary needs through tentmaking, his words "to have you assist me on my journey" were clearly a request for financial support. That request makes scholars say that the Book of Romans can be considered a first-century missionary fund-raising letter.

"Resources follow vision," veteran missionary Bill Porter said one day as a guest speaker in a Southern Nazarene University missions class. His words echoed what Christian Rath, who helped direct Assembly of God earthquake relief in Haiti, wrote to me recently: "Money should chase ministry; ministry should *never* chase money." The point that Bill and Christian both make is that money should not be what drives global outreach decisions. What should determine our priorities and govern our decision-making is the vision of a "great multitude. . . from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing

before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9).

We must never give the impression that collecting money *is* the mission. It is just a resource for accomplishing the mission.

Bill Porter's years of missionary service validate his statement about resources following vision. He helped lead Puerto Rican Nazarene churches to Phase 3 (or regular) district status. Among other accomplishments, Bill's leadership helped that district achieve financial self-sufficiency. Then, after serving in New Zealand, Bill and Juanita went to Venezuela to pioneer Nazarene work in that South American country. Not long before the Porters retired, I spent three weeks in Venezuela and saw firsthand several of the churches planted in the first decade of Nazarene presence. The work the Porters began has continued with Nazarene churches in Venezuela growing by fifteen percent in 2010 and 2011.

Some financial resources aiding the Porters' work came from a seventy-fifth anniversary denomination-wide offering. World Mission Broadcast funds paid for radio broadcasts that provided initial contacts. The World Evangelism Fund supported the Porters and other missionaries, and Work & Witness teams built numerous church buildings and a campground



in Venezuela. However, even with resources flowing from several sources, it was not money that spawned flourishing holiness evangelism in Venezuela. Vision came first. Resources simply followed that vision.

If Bill Porter were here today, he would insist that using a strategy in which "resources follow vision" is valid for more than just one South American country; it is the way missional people called Nazarenes should function around the world.

*one*

## **BECAUSE YOU GIVE**

After preaching one Sunday morning in a mountain church in central Haiti, I enjoyed a meal at the parsonage and then pointed my red, four-wheel-drive vehicle in the direction of Port-au-Prince. The first leg of the trip was down a dirt trail masquerading as a road, so my mind was completely occupied with driving.

Finally, the road widened and leveled out in a valley floor. I disengaged the four-wheel drive, picked up a little speed, and relaxed a bit. My thoughts began to wander, and I found myself thinking about Christ's command to "go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone" (Mark 16:15, NLT). I knew there were many places around the world where the Gospel had not yet been preached. I also knew that missionaries and national evangelists were working to reach those places, but on that day