

# TRANSFORMATIONAL GIVING

## *Three Keys to the “Heart” of the Matter*

By Todd Harper

WE’RE LIVING, PERHAPS, IN THE MOST EXCITING PERIOD of church growth since the time of Christ! In country after country, the Gospel is advancing like never before. The opportunities for Kingdom investment are abundant. The resources in the hands of American Christians are plentiful.

Yet, in the midst of unprecedented affluence, Americans today give proportionally less of their income than during the Great Depression! What are the solutions to this disturbing fact?

In conversation after conversation with a diversity of givers, we at Generous Giving are beginning to draw some conclusions about how to address this conundrum through what we call the 3-Ts of giving: tactics, transactions and transformation.

While we believe that tactics and transactions are important, and can always be improved, our growing conviction is that the core solution to our lack of generosity begins with a heart transformation of the giver. In light of this, we have to first ask the question, “How do we develop transformational relationships with givers?”

Let’s explore three keys to building transformational relationships with givers in your church or ministry: perspective, heart and tools.

### OUR PERSPECTIVE

Beginning with perspective, there’s a fundamental question to ask yourself as a fundraiser: What do I want *for* the givers to my organization? I find I’m more inclined to know what I want *from* people than to know what I want *for* them.

I recently asked this question to a group of experienced development professionals at a conference I was facilitating. The following is a sample of the group’s shared responses: joy, Christlikeness, God’s glory revealed in their lives, meaning and purpose, eternal perspective, Kingdom impact, freedom, contentment, obedience, and calling clarified.

There was energy and passion in the room as people shared these hopes and desires for those with whom they work. We spent the remainder of the time discussing how to integrate these outcomes with our primary responsibility of fundraising. Our belief at Generous Giving is that spiritual transformation and resource development are compatible when we bring an appropriate perspective to our role as fundraisers.

That’s why fundraisers must ask the question: “What do you want *for* those with whom you work?” If they don’t understand what we want *for* them, we’ll be limited in our ability to ask big things *from* them. Our passion and calling is to disciple those entrusted with resources to experience the joy of giving, not for the liberation of resources, but for the liberation of people.

When people are liberated from the love of money, the liberation of resources happens exponentially. Givers are freed to give exponentially more to God's Kingdom, to enjoy greater intimacy with Christ, and to experience joy in their giving.

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Additionally, if we're clear on what we want for givers, we can be bold and intentional in addressing issues of money with those with whom we have strong relationships. In my observation, development professionals' approaches to their jobs typically fall under one of two extremes. Either they are very task focused on fundraising, or they are very relational and tend not to talk about money.

Both these approaches are missing the essential element: a primary focus on the spiritual transformation of the person with whom God has given a relationship. If we only focus on the task of fundraising, we won't have the relational capital to speak into someone's life with any significance.

If we only focus on the relationship and avoid the topic of money, we miss out on the opportunity to be used by God as agents of transformation in the area of life that Jesus called his primary competitor.

If we're to have any credibility and authority in intentionally cultivating a transformation in the lives of others, we must begin with our own hearts. We influence others out of who we are. If I'm enslaved by the love of money, how can I exhort another to move from a worldly orientation to a Kingdom orientation?

If I'm not generous, how can I be a catalyst to others' generosity? If I'm not content, how can I encourage people to move away from accumulation and materialism toward simplicity and contentment?

The Apostle Paul provides a biblical example of a fundraiser. In Philippians 4, Paul thanks the church at Philippi for their concern for him in providing financially: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (verses 11 and 12).

Out of Paul's contentment and assurance of God's provision for his needs, he is able to boldly challenge the Philippians to even greater generosity. In verse 17, he continues, "Not that I'm looking for a gift, but I'm looking for what may be credited to your account."

## Tools for the Transformation Process

THE TOOLS we've found to aid in this transformation process can be grouped into four categories: teaching, relationships, experiences and questions. These and other resources are available at [www.generousgiving.org](http://www.generousgiving.org).

### ■ TEACHING

- *The Treasure Principle*, by Randy Alcorn
- *Fields of Gold*, by Andy Stanley
- "Money: The Currency of Christian Hedonism," in *Desiring God*, by John Piper
- "The Discipline of Simplicity," in *Celebration of Disciple*, by Richard Foster
- Messages by Rick Warren, Randy Alcorn, Henry Blackaby, Joe Stowell, Ravi Zacharias and others, available as audio recordings at [www.generousgiving.org](http://www.generousgiving.org).

### ■ RELATIONSHIPS

- Ongoing relationships with ministry leaders, as described in this article.
- Stories of generous givers are inspiring in transforming givers' hearts (available at [www.generousgiving.org](http://www.generousgiving.org)).
- Small group studies from Crown Financial Ministries and The Treasure Principle.

### ■ EXPERIENCES

- Local ministry involvement
- International vision trips
- Generous Giving conference

### ■ QUESTIONS

- Who is the owner of what you possess?
- How much is enough?
- What is a God-honoring lifestyle?
- Who is the next steward and is he or she prepared?
- Do you have annual and lifetime giving goals?

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Because Paul was free from the power of money in his life, he was uniquely able to challenge those whom God had entrusted to his care. We see this in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, when Paul exhorts the Corinthians to excel in the grace of giving. Hebrews 13:5 teaches: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.”

How are you doing in this area of your life? Are you free from the love of money? Do you trust in God as the provider of your personal needs as well as the needs of the organization you represent? Are you a joyful giver? What must happen in your heart in order for you to be an instrument usable by God in the lives of others?

## OUR HEART

We’ve considered the importance of our perspective in approaching those with whom we interact and the significance of the ongoing transformation in our own hearts. Where do we go from here? How can we be involved in seeing lives transformed in this all-important area of finances? What tools are useful in encouraging heart transformation?

First, we need to recognize that change doesn’t happen overnight or in isolation of your life. The most important facilitators of transformation are time and community. This is why I’m so passionate about writing articles like this one. I believe the role of a ministry leader in the life of a giver can bring about profound transformation and be beneficial for the Kingdom, the giver, the ministry leader and the ministry!

We live in extraordinary times! The Gospel is advancing around the globe. The church is living in unprecedented affluence. Please join me in praying for a transformation of hearts and minds for revolutionary generosity, to the glory of God and the expansion of his church in the world. I’m confident God can use you and me in powerful ways to “spur one another on to love and good deeds.”

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