

Stewardship of Resources: Accountability

1 Peter 4:10-11:

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Review of the “Great Commission” bicycle:

Front wheel: “on the ground” (local) ministry; Back wheel: sending/providing ministry; Bicycle chain: connecting mechanism.

This session focuses on the “connecting mechanism” between the back wheel and the front wheel. How do resources arrive to initiate a local ministry? Are transparent records kept so that donors and receivers can merit long-term trust? What about the people God entrusts to you? Are you just placing subordinates in slots that you want filled or are you taking time to find the right people for the right job, training them, mentoring them and intentionally building skills alongside the gifts that God has given you through them?

We can never fully comprehend the responsibility of stewarding the funds and people that God entrusts to us because we cannot see the future or what “would have been” if we would have handled things differently. But there are certain steps that we can take to ensure transparent relationships in receiving people onto our staff and accepting the responsibility to handle funds donated to our ministries.

The “Connecting Mechanism” between someone who gives you their funds or themselves to use for the ministry is best accomplished when we realize the purpose as outlined above in 1 Peter 4:10-11: To glorify God through Jesus Christ. When we realize that it is not so much the donor or the employee or volunteer to whom we are responsible, but God, we begin to see the importance of stewarding resources in a suitably accountable manner. When the giver and receiver are from different cultures, the transparency needs to be taken to the highest level possible with clear understanding as to exactly who takes responsibility for which task.

In review then, do we understand the long-term goal of local responsibility for ministry direction through prayer and the Holy Spirit? Do we understand that some cultures are unfamiliar with the responsibilities, reporting and accountability norms of the other culture?

Stewarding Finances:

1. Pray for those who give and who will give funds to your ministry. Ask the Lord of the harvest to bring in the amount needed for the ministry to which he has guided you. “Faith Reliance” means total dependence on him, not us, for funding. Each staff member should understand this concept so that they, too, can gratefully receive funding for their work.
2. Make it as easy as possible for a donor to give to your ministry. Receive funds with accurate records so that if a donor requests a financial accounting of their funds, you can answer their questions with confidence.
3. Respond with sincere thanks to the donations of those who give to the ministry and reports on how their funding was used. This is an indication to them that you are grateful and gives them an opportunity to continue giving and enjoying the delight of being a generous giver to advancing God’s Kingdom.
4. Measure activities so that you can give an accurate accounting for the resources spent on collecting funds and administration. Too often the focus is on measuring funds that come in. We have little control over how much people give but we have a lot of control over how we spend our time. Use time wisely in research, presentations and follow-up activities.
5. Finally, measure what God supplies so that you can see his generous supply through often surprising channels.

Spend time refining the processes involved in getting, receiving, measuring and reporting on the resources in ministry. It sometimes feels that this administrative work is a lower priority than keeping the ministry going. However, God has supplied the Giver, the Accountant and the Minister with skills so that we learn to work together to take the Gospel to every nation. May our Lord give us the strength to accomplish his vision for our lives and ministries with excellence.

To ensure this excellence extends cross-culturally, be sure to watch the short video and look at other resources available on the web site: www.lausannestandards.org