

INTRODUCTION TO SUPPORT RAISING

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Raising support is not about whether the Father will take care of you or not, but about inviting others to enter into partnership with you and the Lord for the Kingdom, in the process of which everyone involved will learn more about God's amazing leadership and creative provision; grow in love and unity as the Bride of Christ and enjoy seeing the fruit of their partnership in the lives of other people being impacted for eternity.

I. MY OWN JOURNEY OF SEEING ABBA'S PROVISION IN MY LIFE

- A. The fact that I'm alive today is proof that Abba has been faithful. As child, most of my natural needs were taken care of through my parents. Later, scholarships and jobs. Then two years of only asking the Lord and not letting anyone know about any of my needs. Then the Lord stirred me to start mentioning my needs. And finally I've been actively approaching people the last few years. In the future He might change it again. In each stage He always was my faithful provider.

II. SUPPORT RAISING HINDRANCES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

- *Fear of man*: "Support raising is begging. People will not like me when I ask money."
- *Pride*. "I can take care of myself. I can't ask *them*. Asking is 'lower' than my status."
- *Poverty mindset*. "A missionary should be poor and live off as little as possible." (No, you are an ambassador of the King of Kings who provides generously for all those that represent Him).
- "Only certain people can do it. I can't do/learn it."
- "It is unbiblical to ask for money" (See Bible Study about it)
- "Support raising is about asking money and you only do it when you need money."
- "I don't know enough people/Christians" (assuming that only Christians will support you)

III. A RIGHT FOUNDATION FOR SUPPORT RAISING: FIVE AREAS

- A. We need a right foundation in our hearts; else we will live in fear and manipulate others to get money. We will only see them as potential donors and not seek the best for their lives. "Asking has to be good for the person from whom you ask money." "You won't become poorer, you'll become richer by giving" (Henri Nouwen).
- B. "Support raising is not a response to crisis, it is a form of ministry." (Henri Nouwen) It is about building partnerships, people with needs that we can help meet in each other. Not begging, but inviting others into something far greater than both of us. "We are called to be fruitful, so asking participation in that is not begging, it is pursuing your calling." "We have a vision that is so exciting that we are giving you the opportunity to participate in that vision with the resources that God has given you." (Henri Nouwen) When everyone contributes what God has given the Kingdom will advance the most. The 'senders' are at least as important as the 'goers'. We need each other and are a gift to each other. God uses this to bring the Body of Christ closer than we would be without that need.
- C. Support raising can bring you into freedom from anxiety as you discover the Father's heart in it; it keeps you connected with the body of Christ; it keeps you accountable and produces meekness, love, forgiveness and a lot of other good things in you; it reveals fear, pride, selfishness etc. You have a chance to invite others into what God is doing through the prayer movement worldwide.

- D. **1. Trust God.** He is our provider and source, not our plans, hard work or supporters. Let *Matthew 6:24-34* be real to you and stop/repent of worrying. ***Seek first the Kingdom and it's righteousness***, that's what matters. The other things will be added to you. The more we trust our Father, the more we will start looking forward to *how* He will provide, not *if* He will. Leave it to Him how He chooses to provide. Be specific: if you need transportation, ask for transportation. He might give a car, He might give money for a car, He might give you someone to carpool with or He might help you to get your daily exercise by walking as your means of transportation. He cares for you more and better than you do! When you have a vision to trust Him and not look to people you will be freed up to actually bless those that you approach and not be tempted to 'trust in princes'. *Living from support is not more living by faith than working a job and receiving a monthly paycheck*. Both are about trusting the Father and doing what He calls you to do!
- E. **2. Pray.** Ask the Lord to fully fund you in your calling. Often we do not have because we do not ask! Ask daily for that daily bread! (Mt. 6:11) Pray over verses about His provision and finances. Ask Him to highlight people to pray for and (others) to approach for support. You could even ask for an amount to put behind their names. Pray for them daily/regularly. Ask the Lord to bless them and pray for the specific amount. After a few weeks or months invite them to be a support partner or to increase their giving. Ask in person or through the phone.
- F. **3. Give.** You can't afford not to tithe and give generously. "Try to outgive God!" God always returns in His own time and ways what we sow. Ask Him when money comes in whether it is seed to sow or bread to be kept for yourself. Have a vision to give, to be enabled to give away a lot! A fasted lifestyle is not about a poverty spirit, but about raising more than you need and to live simple to be able to give away more. It will give you so much joy and freedom!
- G. **4. Work.** ***Have a vision to be faithful in what God entrusts to you to do.*** Be righteous, even if it costs you more. It takes effort to support raise, just as with any other form of income, but it is do-able. You don't have to be a great communicator. It is a skill you can develop, just as you would go to school for years to learn skills for other jobs. If you have a job in the marketplace, be faithful and thank God for your paycheck. If you are support raising, be faithful in your ministry and in your support raising as a part of your ministry and thank God for the money that comes in.
- H. **5. Budget.** Take care of your finances and close doors through which you let money flow away. How do you handle the finances you already have? Budget your expenses and keep it, taking out the areas of unnecessary expenses. Budget 'long term', living from support for your whole life. So don't be afraid to include savings for later etc. Do NOT have debt (credit cards, loans etc) as an escape route. Only use your credit card when you have the equivalent amount in your account and pay it off ASAP. Even responsible people spend more when they use a credit card instead of a debit card/checks. When in debt, ask the Lord how you can get out of it. Walk in righteousness. If you are faithful with the little you have, more will be entrusted to you.

Support raising is a do-able, enjoyable skill that asks for faithful diligence and bears much fruit over time.

IV. WHERE AND HOW TO START?

- A. **Pray.** Pray through the things from this training and the verses mentioned in the Bible (esp. Mt 6; 2 Cor. 8 and 9 and see ‘Personal Support Raising’ by Eric Spady). Many people who set out to fundraise do not see God in this and do not pray before each step they take.
- B. **Know your vision. *Who you are in the Lord and what you do in ministry.*** If we don’t have clarity about being a missionary who does the work of missions through intercession, we will not be able to precisely communicate it to others so that *they* believe it. Be prepared to give a 30 second or 30 minute answer when someone asks you what exactly you do.
- C. **Know your needs.** Make a realistic budget for being a long term missionary. It will give you confidence that what you ask for is reasonable.
- D. **DO IT. Make a plan.** Commit yourself to start doing support raising. Schedule a weekly time for it, else you will not do it! Plan what things you want to do for support raising and when you want it finished. Prioritize – don’t expect to do everything in one month, give yourself time. Decide how much money you want to invest. Who could help you with design, printing? Etc...
- E. **Prepare materials:**
1. Newsletter, response card. Gather available materials from your ministry: DVD, booklet.
 2. Personalized literature or media is critical to show potential partners. E.g. a prayer card, magnet, brochure, something through which they will see your picture more often than only when your newsletter comes.
 3. Have a presentation and game plan for different meetings (20-30 min.; 60 min.; 90 min.)
- F. **Invite people to partner.** Make a list of those you want to approach and how. The more personal you can meet with people, the better. These are statistics from Hawkins/Blanc:

Method	% positive response
1 on 1 conversation	98%
Small group	85%
Large group	70%
Phone	50%
Letter (handwritten)	30%
Letter (typed)	15%
Letter (mass mailing)	5%

You can give a presentation over coffee or a meal. That is more comfortable for you and them and helps to build a real relationship. Do a support raise dinner, hosted by some family. Etc.

V. HOW TO CONTINUE?

- A. You never stop support raising, even when you've reached your goal. Don't assume all your supporters will continue for your whole life.
- B. *Continue to increase/build your current support base* through prayer, appeals, newsletters, follow up calls, appointments, fundraising dinners etc.
- C. *Keep pasturing your current supporters* by regular newsletters, occasional phone calls or cards, praying regularly for your supporters etc. Without contact, they feel less connected with your ministry and are more likely to stop over time.
- D. Always send a thank-you card or make a quick phone call when you receive an extra gift or when you get a new supporter. People like to know that their money doesn't just disappear in a black hole.
- E. Whenever you start worrying or feel overwhelmed: pause, repent and rest in Abba again!

VI. SOME PRACTICALS FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION

- A. If you tend to be a perfectionist: ask the Lord to give you insight in what really matters, set limits to how much you want to invest in time, money etc., and try to keep it simple. If you tend to be slack, aim at learning to raise the bar for quality in how you raise support, communicate etc.
- B. Be yourself. People can feel it when it's not 'you'. Stay close to who you are in your style of communication, yet use your developing skills in communication to do it in a professional way.
- C. Good quality is important! A newsletter that looks bad and has lots of spelling mistakes communicates that you don't take your work serious. If it looks better it feels more professional and people often trust that more. So try what you can, but don't get too nervous ☺
- D. Dare to invest. Don't underestimate the influence of communicating through materials that do cost you money. Don't waste it, but be not afraid. Ask the Lord specific to provide for it.
- E. Think about what design you like and what serves your purposes best. Clear and simple often works best to convey the message. A 'full' newsletter or website can distract from its content.
- F. Use pictures. Not too much, not too few. A picture speaks more than a thousand words...
- G. Clear. Upfront. Bold. People love polite, humble honesty. Make sure you really make the point you want to make, don't let it disappear in a mass of words, pictures etc. Resist the temptation to say everything in one newsletter, brochure etc. Don't use over-romanticized language.

- H. Think and pray before you write or make things. What is the message you want to communicate? Ask questions: what would the people that you are in contact with be interested in? How would the Lord want to touch them?
- I. Be personal, yet don't make it all about you and your ministry. Let it be about your involvement in a body of believers. Guard your heart with wisdom. If people hear nothing else but your ministry they tend to feel less connected. But you don't have to give them all the details of your life. You can share things that people can partner and pray for with you without sharing it all.
- J. Check your writing and spelling. **DO NOT USE CAPITALS IN WHAT YOU WRITE**, it comes across as yelling. Let others read through what you wrote and check it.
- K. Think about what medium you want to use for your message. Would it be useful and worth the effort and money for what you want to convey? For example, a newsletter can contain some longer articles than a website, since most people don't read long articles on their computer screen (though most people that write online don't keep it short). A website or brochure needs clear, short pointers and statements. A prayer card or magnet only minimal info.
- L. Repetition, repetition, repetition. Write it in your newsletter, brochure, website, power point, put the slogan on your prayer card and response card, etc. and come back to it regularly.
- M. ***Think how you can make involvement and response easy for those you appeal to.*** It's those 10 second decisions that often result in people not answering their mail or taking initiative.
- Send envelopes with your address and a response card with your newsletters.
 - On your materials, use lines like: 'Yes, I want to partner with you by...' or 'How can you be involved' and then give options.
 - Why not suggest in your support letter 'I need x-amount of monthly supporters each giving \$20,- to reach my goal. You could help me with that by skipping Starbucks a few times a month. That money would go a long way.'
 - Or when you hand someone your magnet, why not for example say in an informal way - without belittling them -: 'you can put this on your fridge, microwave, computer or even your bed frame, whatever is metal will work.' As soon as they come home and don't know where to put that thing they just got they will remember your suggestion.
 - For sending support, suggest automatic direct deposits, as it will help them save time and money for stamps and it makes it less likely that they will forget. With that you can give checks and PayPal as other options.
- N. Ask feedback from friends or your readers: what do they remember from what they saw, heard, read? What stuck out to them, are there things they missed, mistakes they noticed etc. Don't be disappointed when you notice that most of what you spend hours on to communicate was not remembered or came across wrong. Seeing reality gives you reasons to spend time with the Lord to pray and to work on your communication skills and means. And as the statistics show, nothing will communicate 100% what you had in mind.

VII. IDEAS FOR SUPPORT RAISING MATERIALS

- A. See the resources below for more in depth ideas for materials. There are samples available.
- B. Newsletter. A must. Preference: 8-12 times a year, or alternate with personal letters a few times a year. Send it with a response card and return envelope. Make the design better than a normal letter. A newsletter is supposed to contain news. It is not primarily to ask support or to preach. You can mention your needs somewhere in it. However, it might be better to give a good, clear appeal once a year through other means than to give people the feeling that every newsletter is a hidden appeal for money.
- C. Support letter. This is a specific request for support. In it explain short why you send it; what you currently are doing and what it is about; and then make your appeal. Be clear about it. Give clear options how they can support you and how they can actually get the money to you. At the end, let them know that you will contact them soon to hear their response. Include the response card and envelope. Then, after a week or two (not earlier) give them a call and ask how they are doing and what they thought about the request. If you do not follow up, most people will not respond. However, when you follow up personally, many actually are willing to support you.
- D. Response card and return envelopes with your address to go with the newsletter and support letter. Make it clear and specific and give options: prayer partner, (monthly) support + amounts, want to subscribe to your newsletter, or can refer you to someone else who is interested.
- E. Business/prayer cards: easy to make and print and great to hand out.
- F. Refrigerator magnet: I have seen very good results from these. The materials that I hear back most from. People often have it on their fridge and are reminded to pray for you or send their support. Good deals at www.vistaprint.com.
- G. Brochure. Clear, specific, concise. Great resource to hand out or send in a mailing. Easy for people to read back after you talked with them or only had a minute in the hallway with them. You can make them on your own computer.
- H. Power point presentation: make a short 3-5 page version and a longer version. You can use the same information/bullet points as your brochure, with a little adaptation.
- I. Flipbook: you can print out your power point presentation for that purpose and put it in a binder/flipbook. Really helpful if you meet with just a few people, it talks more 'normal' than staring at a laptop screen. On the back of the pages you can type your own notes that go with each page to help you remind what to say.
- J. Materials from the organisation that you work with. Brochures, booklets, info DVD's. Great resources that help a lot in explaining what you do and what the organisation is about.

- K. Website. Great to have all your information in one place and great and easy to refer people back to for them to stay up to date. They are free and easy to make, even for non-nerds (see eg. www.wordpress.com; www.blogger.com) BUT: think it through before you start and don't make it too big and complicated, unless you know from experience what you are getting yourself into. I recommend a website with mostly 'static content': a few pages with clear information that doesn't need to be changed often. A blog on your site is cool, but don't do it if you don't stick with it. It looks bad if it is outdated, so commit to at least post something twice a month. Most people that start stop very soon or never get started because of the time it takes to keep it updated. Suggestions for pages on your site: "Home; about yourself; about IHOP/your ministry; blog; downloads/media (eg your newsletters or cool teachings from IHOP); support; contact". Some website ideas: www.zackhensley.com; www.heisatthedoor.com/wordcast; www.joannareyburn.com; andreavanvoorst.wordpress.com; timsamantha.wordpress.com; www.johanverhoef.nl.
- L. Movie/podcast. Make a short movie or audio file with an introduction to what your vision is and what you are doing or record your latest update for your supporters. You can make it as simple or complicated as you want. Send it out on DVD to potential supporters for Christmas or put it as mp3 on your website.
- M. Send a gift bag: eg. some of your own materials; materials of your organisation; some teachings on a CD; + a thank you card/personal greeting card or letter.
- N. Get a PayPal button on your website or Facebook (under boxes).
- O. TNTMPD! (www.tntmpd.com) is a great program to keep track of all your supporters and support raising. It synchronizes with your Outlook contacts and tasks. You can schedule what you need to do, have reminders when support is late, etc. Highly recommended! (not for Mac).

VIII. RESOURCES

- A. On my website, www.johanverhoef.nl, some of my materials are available, though currently mostly in Dutch.
- B. Eric Spady (www.fundingyourministry.com) and Josh Hawkings/Shawn Blanc (www.supportraisingmaterials.com) have good resources available. I've benefitted much from their input - as well as that of Gary and Marie Wiens and Terry Sherman - for my own support raising. Eric Spady's 'Personal Support Raising' is available for free at IHOP's staff development office (SDO) and is a great resource to go into support raising more in depth.
- C. Scott Morton, *Funding your ministry (whether your gifted or not!)* Betty Barnett, *Friend Raising*.