



Leadership Discussion paper

Many years ago Westminster Abbey was in need of refurbishment to the tune of £1,000,000. A creative campaign was planned: a million people giving £1 each; simple, achievable and obvious. The King would give the first pound, Winston Churchill the second. It could not fail - but fail it did!

When the appeal was launched and the two most influential donors had given it was exactly £2 away from nothing. It seemed an unreachable goal and if it mattered so little to the King and Prime Minister, why should it matter to anyone else? We can assume that £1 was not the true measure of the big two's true *interest and involvement* in the project - but that is how it looked. The story may or may not be apocryphal but the principles are clear.

Another King

In stark contrast is the story of another King nearly 3000 years ago. In 1 Chronicles 28-29 King David encourages his son Solomon to begin building the first Jerusalem temple. He gives him the plans he had made (28:11) and the divisions of the people, listed in chapter 27, are ready to begin the work. David affirms to Solomon the promise of God's blessing and acknowledges Solomon's youth and inexperience to the people. Then what happens?

Leaders must lead

David tells the people two things. Firstly David states that he has provided significant resources from the royal treasury. Suddenly the job is made possible by this huge lead gift; but there is more. David offers

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(29:3) his own *personal* gifts to express his personal devotion. Thus David gives a huge lead gift and affirms his personal commitment to the building of the temple.

Then, and only then, does David have the integrity to ask of the people, ‘*who is willing to consecrate himself to the Lord today?*’ He will not ask anyone to do what he is not prepared to do himself. The effect is spectacular. The leaders of the tribes, of the thousand and hundred units all come forward to bring their gifts in plenty. At each stratum of leadership in ancient Israel a lead is taken by the leaders. The Chronicler records the effect on the people whose names are not recorded in any history book or scripture: ‘*The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord*’.

Leadership matters

There is a joy and a freedom in giving that can set a church free in worship and ministry. But it will rarely happen if leaders do not lead and personally identify themselves with the cause. Giving in Grace will not be effective, resources for ministry will not be released and spiritual freedom will not be enjoyed by the church if the leadership choose not lead in this area of money.

Q: How does your church leadership practice and demonstrate leadership around discipleship and giving?

Set a bold challenge to the church.

The gifts David invited were for the temple of God not a house for mortals. It was a big vision, a bold one. When talking about the financial challenge, be willing to take risks in faith. The goal of Giving in Grace is effective ministry and mission, not the survival of a struggling institution; spiritual growth in discipleship not an embarrassed plea for more money. The manner in which conversations, formal and informal, are conducted around Giving in Grace is important. The local church does not

only need vision and mission statements, vital though these are. It also needs visionaries and missionaries - people with a passion, advocates of God's purpose.

Q: Is the financial challenge before the church a bold one to resource ministry, mission and worship? Are you excited by the mission it can resource?

Make Giving in Grace a priority for the church

David allocated the resources of the royal treasury to the construction of the new temple. Giving in Grace is not a sideline financial initiative while the main work of the church continues elsewhere. Ensure that all the resources necessary for Giving in Grace are allocated. That will include some financial resources so the planning group has a budget but primarily it is the human resources to ensure effective planning and administration of the programme.

Q: Is Giving in Grace a sufficiently high priority for the church and the leadership in particular? How can we make it so?

The planning group and PCC make the first gifts.

Serious consideration should be given to the clergy, wardens, planning group members and the PCC/DCC returning their own response forms before the programme is launched in the church. Individual giving of course remains entirely confidential but the corporate total should be stated in the clergy ask letter that goes to the church members. The sample letters in the Communication section of the Giving in Grace web site provide a simple form of words for doing this.

Q: Are leaders happy to make an early response to Giving in Grace and for the total gift to be declared in the clergy ask letter to the church?

The launch is a joyful invitation to blessing.

With committed lead gifts already in place and a significant measure of consensus amongst the leadership of the church the beginning of the preaching series in Giving in Grace is an invitation to joyful sharing in the grace of giving (2 Cor 8:7). Be

careful that anxiety over the issue of talking money does not lead to a slightly embarrassed and apologetic launch of the preaching series. Paul is clear that generous sowing results in a harvest of blessing, both in the ministry of the church and in the life of the believer.

Q: Are we approaching Giving in Grace as joyful discipleship or embarrassed and apologetic about raising the subject of money?

Keep worship and thanksgiving central.

As the gifts were given King David blessed the Lord before the treasurer counted the cash! Keep the heart of Giving in Grace in the worship and prayer life of the church, not in the finance committee. Reflect Giving in Grace in the liturgy and worship of the church as well as in the preaching and ensure that the final Thanksgiving Sunday is not an afterthought to the preaching series.

Q: Are we committed to pray individually and as a body for the programme?

Heed the warning.

David's young son Solomon appears to play no part. Perhaps he was too young; perhaps David wanted to build the temple himself. But the later judgement on Solomon was that the palace he built for himself was larger than the temple that his father built for God. The gravitational pull of money is always towards ourselves.

Q: Billy Graham said, "If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life." Do we believe this?

It is immediately after this passage that we find King David proclaiming the greatness of God in words that we use at each and every Eucharist: (1 Chronicles 29:11)

**Yours Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory,
the splendour and the majesty
For everything in heaven and on earth is yours.
All things come from you and
of your own do we give you.**

