

Of your own do we give: a bible study in leadership

This brief bible-based reflection will help planning groups and leadership teams reflect upon the importance of leadership in an effective Giving in Grace programme. It should be used alongside the paper 'The people rejoiced: why leadership matters'.



Introduction

By way of introduction, the group leader might tell the following story. It may be apocryphal; it may be true. Either way, it illustrates an important principle about leadership and stewardship in the local church.

Many years ago, Westminster Abbey needed repairs 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 had simplicity, it had celebrity, but it didn't work. When the two most influential donors had given their gifts, the appeal was just £2 away from zero. We can assume that £1 was not the true measure of the King and Prime Minister's true interest and involvement – but that is how it looked. If it matters so little to them, why should it matter to anyone else? And, anyway, the huge goal seems unreachable.

Bible Reading: 1 Chronicles 29:1-14

The story of David's encouragement to his son Solomon and the people of Israel to build the Temple is found in 1 Chronicles 28–29. It is too long to read so the leader should offer a brief summary. David desires to build a temple and his son, Solomon, has the blueprint and will lead the work (1 Chron. 28:1-7). The people are ready and the precious articles for the temple are costed (1 Chron. 28: 11-21). Then, in discussion around the passage, explore the following themes and questions.

Set a bold challenge to the church.

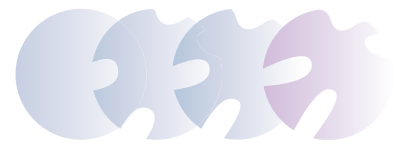
The gifts David invited were for the Temple of God, not a house for mortals (29:1). It was a big vision, a bold one that required a big and bold response from the people of God. A financial challenge is often about our willingness to take risks in faith.

The goal of Giving in Grace is to sustain and resource effective ministry and mission, not the survival of a struggling institution. It is about spiritual growth in discipleship, not an embarrassed plea for more money. How we talk about money matters 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.

Is the financial challenge a bold one to resource ministry, mission and worship or is it asking for more to do the same as yesterday?

The first gifts

In 29:2-3, King David makes not one but two gifts. The first is from the royal treasury – a large gift that gets the ball rolling. The second is a large personal gift that makes clear his own commitment. David will not ask others to do what he is not prepared to do himself. This asks of us, as leaders, a very personal question:



Are we personally willing to review our giving prayerfully and make an early response to Giving in Grace?

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

Leadership matters

David's early gifts allow him with integrity to challenge the people, 'who is willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord today?' (29:5). First to respond are his leaders, the commanders, officers and officials. Neither Giving in Grace nor any other giving programme can be effective in releasing resources for ministry and the joy of giving if leaders choose not to lead around money. Leaders must model the generosity they ask of others and, crucially, be seen to model it.

An early, shared declaration of the total increase in giving from the church council is effective. A commitment to mission giving by the church is a mark of generosity on the broader canvas of mission.

How can the church leadership individually and together model leadership and generosity in giving?

A joyful invitation to blessing.

When they saw the giving of their leaders the story tells us that, 'The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly' (29:9). Joy is the fertile soil from which generosity grows. It was from their great joy that the hard-pressed Macedonian church gave generously to Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:2) and, of course, Paul reminds us that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7).

Giving in Grace is not about balancing the books, though it will do that and more. Leadership in stewardship is an invitation to cheerful giving and to a joyful sharing in the grace of giving. Leaders must be careful that anxiety over talking money does not lead to an embarrassed or apologetic exploration or introduction of Giving in Grace in the congregation.



Keep worship and thanksgiving central

King David blessed the Lord and gave thanks before the treasurer has a chance to count the cash! Keep Giving in Grace close to the worship and prayer life of the church as well as in the finance committee. Reflect the joy of generosity in the liturgy, worship and preaching of the church. Make the closing Thanksgiving Sunday an opportunity to thank God and his people for the provision of material resources and the promise of blessing. It should not be an afterthought to the preaching.

Are we committed as leaders to pray individually and together for Giving in Grace and to encourage and enable the congregation in their prayers?

