

# Module 10

---

## How to Raise Support

---

I want to serve God and be obedient to His leading in my life, but I don't want to....RAISE SUPPORT!

If you have said or thought these words, you are not alone. In fact, most people living a donor-supported lifestyle will admit that at one time they probably had feelings much like this. Although this lifestyle is not a popular one in North America where independence is a high value, it is an essential part of working for many Christian ministries and mission agencies. If God is leading you to a place where support is necessary, it becomes a question of obedience and Lordship not just preference. When that question is answered, support raising just becomes one aspect of the job that God is asking you to do.

Although it can be a difficult obstacle to overcome, many people have come to see it as a blessing. Even though there are stresses and pressures involved in raising and maintaining a personal support team, I would not want to live any other way. The bonds that I have formed over the years with supporters are priceless. I have also had unique opportunities to let God build my faith that I might not have had if I did not raise support. And most of all, when I report to a ministry assignment, there is a sense of seriousness and professionalism there. There are 50+ others that are paying a price to have me ministering there. I had better take it seriously and give it my all. That kind of accountability is invaluable in ministry.

If you are facing an opportunity to raise support, you will probably have some doubts, fears and questions. You are normal! I still get the butterflies each time I pick up the phone to make a support appointment. If you want to be successful you are going to need some guidance. I have listed here five keys to raising your personal support team. This is one of the most exciting adventures that I have ever experienced! So hold on tight and here we go:

### The Five Keys to Raising Your Personal Support

#### 1. Understand the Biblical Basis

Take some time to study the Scriptures for yourself so you will know exactly what God thinks about asking others to give to you and to your ministry. A common misconception about support raising is that it is more spiritual to just pray and trust God to bring the funds in. The great George Mueller was led to do this to support his orphanages in 19th century London. But it is just as Biblical and requires as much or more faith to personally invite others to invest. Either

way, we have to understand that God is the source of our funds, not the donors, our plans or hard work. Scott Morton of The Navigators in his excellent book *Funding Your Ministry Whether You're Gifted or Not* highlights five examples and teachings from the Old and New Testaments about the validity of God's ministers being supported by others:

- A. The example of the Levites (Numbers 18:24) – The Jews gave their tithe to the priests for support.
- B. The example of Jesus (Luke 8:2,3) – Many people supported Jesus and the disciples.
- C. The teaching of Jesus (Mt. 10:9,10) – A Kingdom worker is worthy of his support.
- D. The example of Paul (Acts 18:4,5) – He stopped tent-making to preach full time on support.
- E. The teaching of Paul (1 Cor. 9:1-18) – He had the right to be supported by the churches.

Once you have a biblical perspective on this topic of asking for and living on the support of others, evaluate one more thing: Evaluate your own giving! Before you can ask anyone else to give you have to be committed to sacrificially investing in Kingdom work on a regular basis. Let's practice what we preach!

## 2. Kill the Giants in Your Own Mind

The Bible illustrates this interesting principle with the story of the Promised Land. God had already promised that the Israelites would be able to conquer this beautiful land and that He would give them victory over its mighty inhabitants. The Israelites sent twelve Hebrew spies into the Promised Land to take a look before the whole nation was to enter and claim what God had given them. Only two, Joshua and Caleb, came back with a positive report. The other ten spies were so terrified of the giant-sized men they saw in the land that they confessed, "we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." (Exodus 13:33). Instead of trusting God and moving out with courage, they let fear paralyze them. How they viewed themselves affected how the giants viewed them. It is the same way in support raising. The confidence level that we have in our God, our vision and ourselves can make us.... or break us! All of us have different "giants" in our own minds that will keep us from beginning and persevering in the process of assembling a full support team. These are some common "giants" we must conquer:

- A. You or your parents might think support raising is really just begging.
- B. You might think you are not a worthy investment.
- C. You might think that support raising is just a "necessary evil" that must be endured.
- D. You might think that people are rejecting you or your ministry if they say no.

You must kill these giants one at a time as you fill your mind with the Scriptures and believe what God has said about you and your calling. Then you can courageously march in and take the land! Just as God had prepared the land for the people to simply go in and take it, we need to believe that God has prepared the hearts of the donors and we need to walk boldly in faith to find those givers and ask them to join us in our vision.

### 3. Pray and Plan

#### **Pray!**

Author S.D. Gordon said it well, "Prayer is the real work of the ministry. Service is just gathering in the results of prayer." We need to bathe our donors and ourselves in prayer before, during and after this process. God will go before you. He will also give you a love for your donors as you pray for them individually.

#### **Create Your Budget!**

Include everything you need for your personal needs, giving, saving and ministry expenses. Seek to balance a lifestyle that will allow you to maximize your effectiveness with the group you're reaching, but also be above reproach before your donors in the stewardship of your finances. If you happen to have school debt, simply include the required monthly amount and keep going. Your donors will admire you for keeping your promise to pay it back. Plan on and commit to raising 100% before you report to your assignment. Have a "when I raise my support attitude," not an "if I raise my support."

#### **Namestorm!**

Write down every person that you have ever known during your lifetime. Don't play Holy Spirit by saying, "Oh, that person would never give." You will be surprised by who gives and who doesn't give! Also, include people that share a heart for the particular area of ministry you are entering. List churches, Sunday School classes, foundations and corporations. The bulk of your support, though, will come from the individuals with whom you meet.

#### **Map Out a Plan!**

Divide up all the names according to the cities they live in. Then label each name "hot", "cold", or "medium" depending upon whether they probably will give, probably won't give, or they might give. Next, pray and seek to attach an amount that you would like to ask them to give. Don't use a one-size-fits-all plan; instead, base the amount on what you perceive they are able and willing to give along with the kind of relationship you have with them. You might feel more comfortable suggesting a range rather than a specific amount (i.e. from \$150-

\$300). Either way, know that the tendency for most people is to ask for too little...not too much! Remember, there is no cash flow problem in heaven. Americans alone give over 100 billion dollars to charity each year. God has instilled in people a desire to give and you are helping them to invest in eternal things and, therefore, building up their treasure in heaven. Go for it!

### **Plan Out a Map!**

Figure out what city you will go to first, second, etc. Schedule it out on your calendar. I would suggest sending a letter in advance telling him or her what you are doing and that you will be calling, but the key is to call each person in advance of the trip in order to get the appointment. Don't let them say yes or no to the giving; your only objective is to get an appointment with them. Seek to line up all of your "hot" prospects first, then your "medium" prospects next and finally, your "cold" prospects.

#### 4. Ask them face to face

This is crucial. Jesus said "we have not because we ask not." The word "ask" is used in the gospels 113 times. God wants to teach us about asking: Him and others. I have looked at surveys as to why people give and the number one reason is always because someone asked them! It is not unspiritual or fleshly to ask. It is biblical, spiritual and faith building to ask. Let's not hide behind our fears. Let's walk toward them and render them powerless! The worst thing that they could say is, "No". If you just send a letter out or make a group presentation you might have a 10% response rate. If you send a letter and then call to ask you might get 25% of people to say yes. But, if you are willing to sit down eyeball to eyeball with others and lay out the incredible ministry vision God has called you to, usually well over half of the folks are pulling their checkbooks out! I've had some tell me they have never been turned down in an individual support raising appointment! My research shows that ministries that train their staff to personally ask for the gift raise their full budget in less than half the time of groups that simply share the need, but don't ask. We have not because we ask not.

#### 5. Cultivate the Relationship

Here are the ABC's for having a long and fruitful relationship with your supporters:

- A. Remember it's not fundraising, but "friend raising." You can have an incredible ministry in their lives and you might be their only connection to Jesus Christ or the Great Commission.
- B. Consider giving your ministry time to your support team: praying, writing, calling and ministering.

- C. Thank before you bank. When a new person joins your team or new gift comes in, be quick to respond with a thank you card or call. Be prompt and professional in all of your correspondence and record keeping.
- D. Regularly send them well-written newsletters. Share how their investments are paying off along with some specific prayer requests. Occasional postcards, phone calls, and visits are great too. Beware: The main reason people drop off of support teams is that they do not hear from their missionary.
- E. Win, Keep, Lift. When you win a donor they are now on your team. Keep them on the team by caring for and cultivating them. Periodically, ask them to consider lifting (increasing) their monthly or annual gift to you. Campus Crusade had a campaign where they were asking people to give 1 million dollars to their ministry. Almost 250 people said "yes"! Research showed, though, that the very first gift that each had made to this ministry years earlier had been on an average.... a mere \$10! Someone had taken the time to win, keep, and (over the years) to lift!

People will stick with you for life if you will appreciate them and keep them informed. View them as vital partners in your ministry and you will gain not only life long supporters, but friends too! One day you will turn around and realize how blessed you have been and that you would not want to live any other way! Trust God and begin this exciting adventure today. You will never regret it!

## **Getting Practical**

### ***Biblical Basis:***

Is support raising biblical? Look up these verses to gain a proper perspective:

Num. 18:24	Deut. 12:19	Neh. 13:10-12	Matt. 10:10
Luke 8:3	Acts 20:33-35	Rom. 15:24	Rom. 16:1-2
1 Cor. 9:3-15	2 Cor. 11:8-9	1 Tim. 5:18	3 John 5-8

### ***Philosophy:***

1. There may still be some doubt in your mind about raising support. Think through how you would answer these questions.  
View of GOD: How big is your God? Is He able to provide for all your needs? Is He able to raise up people to join your support team? Can God fail you?  
View of SELF: How capable are you? Can God use you? Why would God want to use you? Are you a worthy investment for your supporters?
2. Read this paragraph and record your thoughts.  
 Why does support raising seem so awkward? Is support raising unbiblical or is it just un-American? Jay Gary says, in his article "Support Raising," that as Americans, "We are supposed to be 'rugged individualists' who refuse handouts and stand on our own two feet. Financial independence is the goal. Some people's problem with raising support, then, is not that it's at odds with any practice in the Bible. Maybe their problem with raising support has more to do with it being counter to the American way of life."

### ***Tools:***

1. Record progress: Use a spreadsheet to keep track of your progress. Record who has been sent a letter, who you have called, who has given you an appointment, and who has received a thank you note. Use this to stay organized. Be accountable to someone.
2. Portfolio: Create a thin folder that visually explains your ministry and needs. Take it on your appointments to help explain your ministry to potential supporters.
3. Prayer: Pray before every support call and appointment. Pray for God's help and provision. He is faithful to those who humble themselves and depend on him.
4. Newsletter: Write a two-page newsletter about yourself to keep people informed in a casual way about your ministry and life, and send it to everyone on your list of current and possible supporters. Be sure to send another one during and/or after your ministry trip.
5. Books: Books that can help you with the concept of support raising are *Friend Raising* by Betty Barnett, *The Support-Raising Handbook: a Guide for Christian Workers* by Brian Rust and Barry McLeish, and *People Raising* by William P. Dillon.

### ***Getting Started:***

1. Brainstorm list of names: Think of 50-100 people you can ask for support. This includes family, friends, church members and anyone else you know. Write a detailed list that includes phone numbers and addresses.
2. Make practice phone calls: Tell a friend to let you practice on them and pretend it is a support call. Act like you are trying to schedule an appointment.
3. Plan first few waves of people: Think through the next few weeks and plan which people to ask first. Have about 7-10 people per wave so you don't get too overwhelmed.
4. Make a newsletter: Write out some stories about your life. Include things like what you are learning from the Word, what your plans are for the summer or how school is going this semester – anything that catches people up on what you are doing. Send it to everyone on your list.

### ***Method:***

1. Schedule: Here is a possible schedule pattern of how to begin your support trail.  
*Week 1*: Send letters to top ten people on your list of possible supporters.  
*Week 2*: Call top ten people and schedule support appointments for next week. Send letters to next ten people on your list.  
*Week 3*: Have support appointments with top ten people. Call people from week 2 and schedule appointments. Send support letters to next ten people on your list.  
*Week 4*: Call week 1 people to find out if they have decided to join your team. Write thank-you letters for each appointment with week 1 people. Have appointments with week 2 people. Call people from week 3 and

schedule appointments for next week. Send support letters to next 10 people on your list.

*Week 5:* Keep going through the process of waves until you have full support.

2. Referrals: Ask friends for referrals to continue your support trail. This is an important part of the process, because you never run out of possible supporters on your list. Example: At the end of a support appointment, say:  
*“There is one other way that you could help me. Could you make a list of 5-10 people you know who might be interested in hearing about my ministry?”*
3. Set Goals: Plan to make about 10 phone calls and send 10 letters a week, so that you don't get behind on your schedule.

### *In Closing...*

Raising support is one of the biggest reasons people are kept from participating in ministry. What a tragedy! The misconceptions that surround support leave a person feeling scared, insecure and humiliated about the idea. The truth about it is that God intended His church body to be inter-dependant and you will experience incredible blessing when you step out and trust in His means of provision for you! Not only will you be encouraged by the process, but those on your team will enjoy the involvement in ministry that you allow them to have. Don't let support keep you from the participating in the advance of His Kingdom!