



A GATHERING PLACE
FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION ARTICLES,
RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

How To RAISE Your Standard of Generosity

By Jonathan Martin, author of Giving Wisely and missionary with Co-Serve International

Nothing is more life changing than a mission trip. When we see spiritual and physical needs, we want to make a difference—a lasting positive difference. When we come home from the trip, we want to stay involved and that often means financially. So how can we be sure the difference is lasting and positive?

Having watched and heard hundreds of stories of how money ended up hurting rather than helping, I wanted to know the principles of giving in a lasting and positive way. After meeting with and interviewing experienced missionaries who have seen all the good and bad that money can do, we uncovered four guiding principles. Then I noticed they weren't really our principles—they were staring at me from the pages of the New Testament in the life and practices of the apostle Paul.

The four guiding principles to giving in a way that is lasting and positive as we discovered from experience and Scripture can easily be remembered using the acrostic **RAISE**.

Relationship - We need to give through those we really know and truly trust. It is impossible to hear a story, or a three-minute testimony, and decide that person and that organization is trustworthy. Only through an ongoing and open transparent relationship can we know how our money is being put to work for good. To send money to a pastor or an evangelist overseas that we met once for a few brief moments is tragically one of the quickest ways to ruin that person's ministry and character. Use your money to build lasting relationships. Get financially behind people you know and love and trust and who have impacted you personally, rather than an organization that made an emotional appeal through a famous musician at a concert.

The biblical model is to send your own. Send people from your church who have proven themselves trustworthy, and use your money to go and serve alongside them. Ask them how it is best to give. This relationship with someone who knows both cultures well is vital. They are the bridge between you and that other culture knowing how your money can do good and how it can harm. Remember this - God came to this world in the form of Jesus - a relationship! And Jesus was not loaded with cash. It is relationships that change lives, and only money that fosters these relationships is eternally helpful.

Accountability - Whenever we give money, we need to know that good systems are in place to ensure it gets to the proper place, people, and projects and that the money is being used to accomplish its purposes. How can you know? This takes us back to the first principle - open and transparent relationships.

Another way to ensure accountability is through good accounting systems. Some people want to give directly to a pastor or a missionary to save the overhead of accounting costs, but there are legal and ethical problems with doing this on an ongoing basis. I cannot tell you how many ministers and ministries I have seen undermined and destroyed by this kind of practice. Give through reliable and fiscally responsible organizations and through people who communicate what is happening on the ground.

Indigenous Sustainability- We should give in such a way that empowers-in a way that keeps on giving even after the gift is gone. Teaching a culture to fish is far better than providing fish every day for everyone until they die. Ask this question: Is the money I am giving creating something that will outlast me and my gift? Or is my gift creating something that will continue to need my gift forever.

It is far better to give in such a way that will help an indigenous church take care of its orphans, rather than giving to foreign organizations that are taking care of the orphans for them. It is far better to create a church movement that does not need western money, than to fund a church where the pastor continually needs western money to exist. Though the Philippian church sent Paul to plant a church. Paul never planted a church that needed the Philippians money to sustain it. Supporting a national pastor with western dollars simply does not produce a model that can reproduce itself, and it often corrupts and undermines that pastor in the process.

Equity- The simple act of giving a national pastor your wristwatch as you leave the country can create problems you will never know about after you leave. Until you know the language and have lived in the culture for years, you cannot know what will cause inequities that will cause fighting and jealousy within that culture. One long term missionary lamented, "Whenever short-term teams give away candy, watches, or cash, it makes us long-term workers seem selfish in comparison and it undermines what we are trying to do. So ask the long-term worker before you give anything away. They know the good or the harm it might cause.

To learn more about how these principles work and change lives contact jonathan@co-serve.org and I'd be happy to get you a copy of my book *Giving Wisely*.



Jonathan is the author of *Giving Wisely* and works for Co-Serve International. Jonathan and his wife, Janie, work with international teams, nationals, and their agencies to help shape servant leadership communities that impact their culture. They also coach church leaders to create and sustain servant-leadership communities with and amongst their staff and congregations. Previously, Jonathan was a long-term missionary and a missions pastor at Good Shepherd Church near Portland, OR. If you have questions or would like to connect directly with Jonathan, you can email him at Jonathan@co-serve.org.