



Strengthening charitable causes to change the world through generosity

The \$10,000 Car Wash

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Executive Summary

Fundraising, as congregations currently do it, is labor intensive and does not bring joy. In fact, a major reason for staff burnout is that congregations don't adequately fund its ministry with young people, and they have to rely on special fundraising with high investment and low return. There is a better way. Fundraising can align with our ministry goals and can return significant resources, strengthening our ministry.

What are we doing wrong?

1. We tell people what we are doing instead of why we are doing it, and
2. We don't ask for the gifts that are needed to adequately fund our ministry.

It is time to let our current models go. A couple of examples:

1. As a youth, my youth director auctioned us off to do yard work. I think I made about \$2 per hour cleaning up yards. I would have been better off just going to my minimum wage job at \$3.35 per hour. Even worse, there was no connection made between our trip, our ministry, faith development, or even relationship building in the church. It was fundraising for the sake of money with no other purpose.
2. I witnessed a fundraising breakfast to send the children and youth to Music Week at their local camp. The breakfast was unremarkable. The service was surly and slow. And at the end of the meal, the Music Director lifted up some baskets and said, "if you would like to make a gift to help the kids go to camp, place your gift in the baskets."

She never shared:

- Why this ministry was important
- the outcomes from previous participants
- how much it cost to send a kid
- how many kids were going
- the ways in which kids grow in faith at Music Camp
- what parents notice about the growth of their kids as a result
- the ways in which worship will be enhanced in the future thanks to the program
- a chart of how many gifts and of what size we needed
- a way to make a credit card gift

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She never told the story. So, the group received a lot of \$5 gifts. And everyone left having had a mediocre breakfast, with no real impact from the event and no sense of what God was up to in the lives of these young people.

There is a better way.

it's three simple steps: Inform, Inspire and Ask

1. **Inform:** Give people the information they need. Let them know what you are doing and how much it will cost. Tell them how the trip aligns with your goals. Share the details. This step should be simple, and quick.

2. **Inspire:** People want to be inspired. Explain why you need the funds. Show how has God worked through previous programs. Share quotes from previous participants (if they are in college now, use video). Have parents share how they hope God will work through the ministry you are doing. And most importantly, let the kids share what they expect God to do in their lives.

3. **Ask:** Ask for enough and expect to get what you need. The rest of this section will share how to assure you cover the key concepts of **Inform, Inspire, and Ask.**

Important: *The #1 reason a special gift appeal will fail is because not enough people participate. To get people to participate, they need to be Informed, Inspired, Asked, and then Thanked.*

Challenge gift: Once you know you will have a special gift appeal, look for a challenge gift. A challenge gift is a pledge from one person or family that “I will give \$_____ if the rest of the congregation raises \$_____.” A challenge gift motivates and ensures that enough gifts are received. Try to get the challenge gift at 10% of the total goal of the special appeal (\$15,000 goal means you try for a \$1,500 challenge). It works best to have one family offer the challenge, not a group of people.

Gift Chart: It is critical to have a gift chart that shows the gifts needed for the project to succeed. Normally, the top 10 gifts suggested equals a bit more than 50% of the total goal. The top gift is 10% of the goal, the next two gifts are each 5% and so forth. Try to have something for everyone. We are called to equal sacrifice, not equal giving.

Here is a sample \$10,000 gift chart:

Amount of Gift	# of Gifts Needed	Running Total
\$1,000	1	\$1,000
\$600	4	\$3,400
\$300	6	\$5,200
\$150	10	\$6,700
\$100	15	\$8,200
\$60	20	\$9,400

Many gifts of other amounts		\$10,000
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A Suggested Calendar

Week 1: Send a letter (electronically or in the mail) announcing the special gift appeal for your trip or project, the timetable and goal. An introductory temple talk in worship explaining about the project can help get people on board.

Week 2: Deadline for having the challenge gift solicited. Try to have the top 3 gifts solicited by now. Announce Challenge. Don't announce more than that. Have a temple talk/mission moment from a youth sharing how they hope God will work in their lives through the trip.

Week 3: Have a previous participant share how God used the event to have a long-term faith enhancing impact on their life. Have those who will benefit most share their desired impact through written words in the bulletin. Announce the commitment of the top three gifts. You want to start building a feeling that the goal seems small and others are jumping on board.

Between week 3 and 4: Have the youth committee members (and/or congregation council) each make their commitment during this time so that it is announced next week.

Week 4—The Actual Event (car wash/meal/auction) Announce that you have 100% youth committee (and council) gifts in, along with the top 3 gifts, and the challenge gift. Let people know you are well on the way to reaching the goal. Hand out intent cards and collect them in a very intentional manner (don't have a box to drop them in). Allow for people to pay over time (this allows for larger gifts).

Week 5: Celebrate/Announce

- Announce in worship how much is already in
- Send an email to the entire congregation of total raised to date and average gift size
- Open up the chance for people to email their response or fill out an online form

Week 6: Continue to ask for gifts/start phoning after today if you are still short of the goal.

Finally, say “thank you!”

- Show gratitude for gifts immediately.
- When you are on the trip, send outcome stories of what God is doing through the trip so that people remember that their gift is making an impact for the Kingdom of God. This will also make it far easier to raise money the next time.

Best Practices

Focus on Inspiration: Focus your messaging about what impact God had on kids lives the previous time the event was engaged. And, have the youth going this time share what they

hope God will do in their lives as a result of the event. This helps fundraising, but more importantly, it helps the youth have a more meaningful experience.

Challenge/Matching Gift---It is hard for youth leaders to understand the potential generosity of people in the congregation since many youth leaders salaries fall below the median salary in their zip code. However, there are people that have resources and want to be generous. I like to have the challenge gift be for total number of gifts received (normally about 33% of the giving households to the congregation). So, the challenge gift would be someone offering to give \$1,000 if 50 families join them in making a gift. It builds energy and excitement. It is also nice if the challenge gift is 10% of the total needed.

Parents give first—Parents should be asked to contribute to the cause. Sometimes they will cover 10-25% of the total cost of the event and this money can be used for deposits and other cash flow needs before you are able to conduct the event. This way, the parents are saying, “join us” in sending our kids to a faith forming event.

Gift chart and pacesetting gifts—Show people what size gifts you need. If you tell people to simply make a gift, they will have no idea what size gift you need. I often tell people that a \$20 gift is huge if you only need to raise \$50. However, if you need \$25,000, a \$20 gift isn’t going to really help you get to the goal. Also, **never** take the total needed and divide by the number of families and say, “if everyone just gives \$125 we will reach our goal”. This isn’t fair and you will never hit the goal.

Keep track of who gives—People who support your cause are telling you they are interested. Keep track of them. Thank them. Let them know their gift made a difference. They want you to succeed and will help you again if you don’t take them for granted.

Remind people of outcomes on a regular basis even between need for money—Tell impact stories from your ministry on a regular basis. When you do, people will start asking if they can give you money rather than you having to ask for it.

Obstacles

Scarcity mindset in congregation—Chances are your congregation is “behind budget”. The budget and giving to special projects have very little in common. People won’t stop giving to the general operations of the church because you ask for money to benefit the youth. In fact, more often, people will give more to the church when they hear about the impact that your program is having on the youth.

People think kids should “work for it”—I’m not sure how we can theologically justify making kids work to go on a faith-forming trip. At their baptism, we promise to be part of their faith journey. Sending them to events that will benefit their faith journey should not be something they have to work for.

People think they are paying for car wash or meal—I like to advertise that we are having a car wash and then never actually wash any cars. Because, the fundraiser isn't about getting something. The fundraiser is about investing in the lives of children and youth. If you want to wash cars, do that as a thank you event and don't let people give you money. If you do serve a meal, make sure you have someone cover the cost of the food ahead of time so you can assure your guests that they are not paying for the meal.

Samples and Resources

- Placemat
- Gift chart