Funding For Evangelism and Mission
Lausanne Issue Group #27

Introduction:

Lausanne 2004 … Conference on World Evangelization … addressed many of the key issues facing the church and its mission in this decade. Participants at the conference were invited to join one of over 30 "Issue Groups," with each group assigned on a specific topic to present a paper reflecting their work. Group #27 was asked to address the issue of "Funding For Evangelism And Mission."

Group #27 consisted of 27 ministry leaders representing several types of ministry and various countries. The majority of the participants lead ministries in what is commonly called "the developing world." The Group was co-led by Dr. E. LeBron Fairbanks (USA) and Dr. MacMillan Kiiru (Kenya). Dr. Charles Roost (USA) and Dr. E. LeBron Fairbanks (USA) served as co-editors of this article.

The Challenge:

God often chooses to use the resources of this world to accomplish His work. Human resources and financial resources seem to be those most significant in the work of the church. History proves that funding for evangelism and mission is very important for the work of the kingdom.

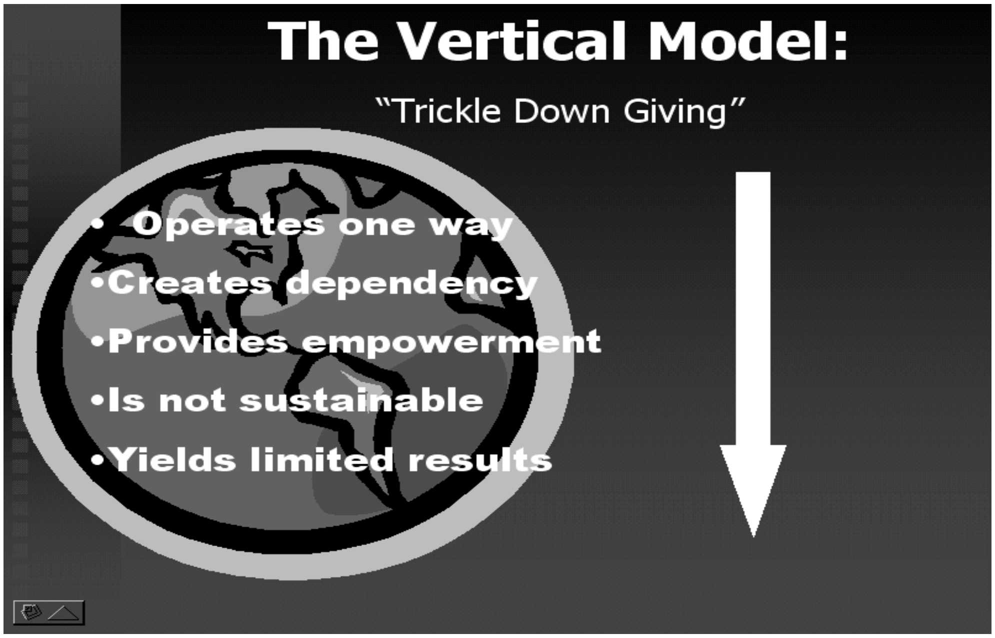
The funding of evangelism and mission has hosted both great achievements for the benefit of the kingdom and significant pain and economic abuse within the body of Christ. As was demonstrated in Christ's ministry and the life of the early church, money is a God-given tool for catalyzing mission but when used without integrity and good stewardship it has the potential to create significant harm.

The challenges faced in the funding arena seem to fall into three categories:

1. Shortage of funds to accomplish reasonable goals.
2. Misuse of funds on the part of ministry personnel and organizations.
3. Distortion of biblical principles and standards in fund development.

The Current Scene In Mission Funding:

The current environment in funding evangelism and mission is generally characterized by a vertical, top/down arrangement where the money from donors "trickles down" to the recipient organization or ministry.



This vertical model, because of its hierarchical nature, has created major problems within the body of Christ. The donor has been reduced to a "source" for funds. The ministry organization has been reduced to "operators" of fund raising schemes primarily related to organizational budgets. Missing in the model is the character that honors biblical principles for the effective use of God's resources to accomplish His purposes. The top/down relationship within the body of Christ disfigures stewardship and cries out for redemption and transformation.

A New Model

What is required is acceptance of the proper theology of funding and subsequent practices that will point the church to fulfillment of the task of evangelism and mission while affirming the equality of all believers and unity within the body of Christ.

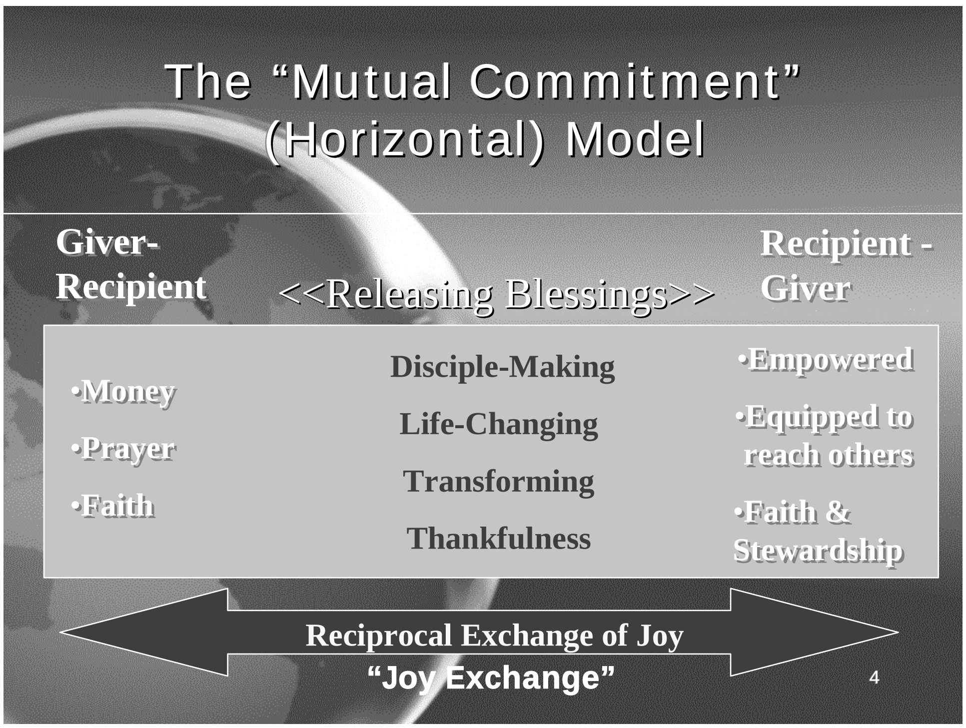
The challenges in funding evangelism and mission in the current environment can be traced back to the lack of an adequate theological framework for the role stewards as they manage financial resources. In the absence of a comprehensive theology and a reflecting set of principles for financial resources, the world of non-profits has fallen prey to ineffective models and strategies characterized by the following:

1. Lack of a functional theology regarding fund development and resource management.
2. Lack of mutual understanding, effective strategies and clear funding models concerning the biblical relationship between giver and receiver.
3. An assumption of limited local resources available to the emerging church and the lack of effective leadership in the management of resources.
4. Education and training that is sufficient . . .
   …in stewardship and fund development at both ministry leadership training institutions and local congregations.
   …for funders in mission strategy.
   …for mission agency executives and their development staffs.

5. Attitudes of dependence on the part of receivers and co-dependence on the part of providers.

The new model, strongly recommended by Lausanne Issue Group #27 "Funding Evangelism and Mission," changes the way giving and receiving is perceived, approached and accomplished. It is recommended with the understanding that such a major paradigm shift will not be easily adopted.

This model, called the "Mutual Commitment" model, is **horizontal** in structure, placing all parties in the fund development effort on an equal plane. In this model, all believers enjoy an equal standing before the throne of Christ.



This new model can best be understood in the reorientation of five key concepts within giving and receiving: stewardship, relationship, accountability, dependency and the role of intermediaries.

Stewardship:

Unfortunately, most teaching on the subject of stewardship takes place in the church when there is an urgent financial need. "Stewardship" has become the inappropriate synonym for "fund raising." As such, it is true impact is lost in the struggle of funding.
Closely attached to the fund-raising misconception of stewardship is the assumption that stewardship is only for the "rich."

A steward is anyone who manages resources that are owned by another. Stewardship, then, is the exercise of resource management. It is a trust given by the owner to a trusted manager. That trust includes provision of assets for management and a set of guidelines or expectations as to what is to be done with the owners assets. The effective steward understands that some day a report must be given to the owner as to how those resources have been used.

Scripture clearly indicates that God owns everything. This being true, every individual's possessions, be they little or much, are not owned by the individual but by God. The wealthiest oil barren in the middle east owns no more than the impoverished resident of one of the world's mammoth slums. Every person is simply a manager of what God owns.

Stewardship of God's resources in harmony with His purposes universally runs counter-culture to our humanity. We want to own. Ownership is a highly valued secular economic principle. Yet stewardship, not ownership, is God's design.

How then does one become a mature steward? The biblical record is clear. The workshop in which stewardship, (the management of another's resources) is matured is in the workshop of giving. "It is better to give than to receive." Giving, for most people, is a discipline that matures into a grace. For some, it is a gracious gift of God's spirit. The grace and gift of giving have little to do with quantity, and everything to do with the steward's effective management of God's resources.

The role of Christian leadership in the fund development journey is greater than meeting the budget. The donor is more than a potential source for more money. He is a steward, learning and growing in the grace of giving. The ultimate goal of the receiver, as funds are sought, is to stimulate that stewardship maturity, rather than just wring another dollar out of the donor's pocket. The solicitor of funds, whether directly related to the receiving organization or an intermediary, will increasingly benefit from the potential of the donor only as that donor is blessed with the full impact of the joy of using God's funds for those efforts that are close to His heart. The donor becomes a partner in ministry, not just an "absentee landlord of economic potential." It is the growth of the steward in the grace or gift of giving that unlocks his potential for significant financial, prayerful and personal involvement, not the clever manipulation of a message from the receiver.

As the steward grows in stewardship maturity, the desire of that steward will be to more completely understand and identify with the ministry, the receiver. This produces the quality of commitment that unleashes lay energy for expanded ministry. It also opens the ministry leader to a broader responsibility for constructive accountability and communication that feeds stewardship growth.

In the "Mutual Commitment" model for fund development, all parties in the transactions related to God's resources give and receive so that each participant is more qualified than before to manage God's resources in a manner that reflects His value system. In such a commitment, the giving and receiving is elevated to a true spiritual act and freed from the potential of manipulation and abuse.

Relationship:

We are members of the Body of Christ and as members we are all interconnected. When one member of the body suffers, the whole body suffers, and when one member of the body succeeds, the whole body succeeds (Romans 12:4ff; I Corinthians 12:12ff). It is also imperative for us to remember that the Lord is especially pleased with us when we serve "the least" (cf. Matthew 25:40,45).

As members of the Body we have all been endowed with God-given resources, differently and unequally. God provides differences to require sharing in the Body life of the Church. God's resources are given for a purpose: for the common good, and particularly for the task of the Great Commission.

As members of the Body, we have a horizontal relationship with one another: not of the have and have-nots but as members of the body of Christ; not of the superior to inferior but as brothers and sisters in Christ standing together at the foot of the cross; not of those from the North and those from the South but as citizens of the New Jerusalem. It is in this family relationship that true fellowship in ministry takes place.

The "Mutual Commitment" model dictates that in giving and receiving, relationship must be of utmost importance. In this relationship we are bound by the following:

1. We are to have respect for one another as members of the same family.
2. We are required to work to encourage and support one another.
3. We must celebrate our God-given gifts and share them for evangelism and mission.

Our relationship must never be defined by, nor become limited to, the mechanisms of financial transfers. Relationship value reflects the Body of Christ, not some economic standard or potential.

Accountability:

Mutual accountability is one of the most vital elements within the activity of funding mission. Redeemed and transformed accountability has the potential to revolutionize the manner in which funding is accomplished and serves as the strongest vehicle to move funding of mission into a new future.

In the historic "Trickle Down" model with its vertical arrangement, accountability is often sought through a one-way imposition of "rules" from the donor, accompanied often by expectations that particular values will be exhibited in the funded ministry. In the Mutual Commitment model, accountability is first to God and His full design in resource use… for both giver and receiver … and has the purpose of building relationship and trust within the Body. As such, it is multi-directional in concept and function.

The primary corrective task to enhance accountability is to develop a new understanding of individual and corporate stewardship and relationship that emerges out of the practical application of the new theological vision for funding. Included in this new way of thinking are the following concepts:

1. Accountability includes the space for "failure." The relationship which underpins accountability should be capable of dealing with such "failure." This is the case for either side of the relationship. In overseeing the process of funding, both donors and

receivers need to manage their expectations in harmony with the redemptive character of God's family.

2. It is vital to create and maintain the fullest mutual level of trust. Such trust can only thrive in an environment of open communication.

3. Good management training is an important element of ensuring faithfulness and good stewardship.

4. There should not be an expectation that funding always produces instant results. In some settings and in some ministries, instant, final results are highly unlikely. Funding produces activity … the Holy Spirit produces results.

5. It is necessary to have mutual clarity, a "code of good practices" that helps define and determine accountability structures before funding/partnership agreements. Models of this mutual understanding must be developed or accumulated from ministries currently practicing them with effective results.

6. Effective accountability can be supported by active research and honest appraisals that serve to strengthen the process of funding and use of funds.

7. Practitioners of mission will implement thoughtful missiology and wise stewardship through integrity and adequate training.

Accountability always requires open and candid relationships. The biblical model of "overseers," instructed in I Timothy and elsewhere, establishes the notion that accountability rests within communal relationships. No individual, regardless of skill or leadership clout, is an island or a sovereign. Each serves in a reporting relationship to the Body.

In the end, the mandate is to "do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the eyes of others" (2 Corinthians 8:21). Those who give and those who receive must be faithful stewards, anticipating that day when all will give an account to the Lord for everything He has entrusted to us.

Interdependence:

When giving and receiving take place there is always the risk of developing unhealthy dependency. An unfortunate, yet all too often natural consequence, unhealthy dependency is the exclusive expectation that someone external will supply necessary resources.

Such dependency, while born in the economic arena of life, has complications far more widespread than what is happening in the ministry's funding. It often builds into the receiver a set of "needs" and "wants" that stretch the priorities and values of the receiver out of functional form. Concomitantly, this dependency can also develop in the giver a subtle, but real, co-dependency syndrome.

Unhealthy dependency . . .

…drains the receiver of initiative. When someone "out there" is financially responsible, personal creativity, drive and energy soon wane.

…creates a one-sided relationship, exacerbating the "haves, have nots" syndrome. This spirit of "unequalness" feeds all that destroys the potential for true relationships and communal oneness.

…reduces the self-confidence of the receiver. Leadership thrives on turning a challenge into an opportunity. When that process is short-circuited by dependency, the leader-receiver loses the personal sense of adequacy.

…robs the receiver of positive self-image. When one of the two most significant resources for ministry is in the hands of "unknown others," ministry leaders see themselves as handicapped.

…may transfer faith and trust in God to the donor. While spiritual language may color the speech of the receiver, in an unhealthy dependent relationship the receiver can easily have more confidence in special donors than in God. When challenging financial times come, it is the donor who is called upon with a plea for resolution.

…distorts the biblical truth of stewardship and the grace of giving. True Christian fund development directly reflects God's purposes for entrusting His people with His financial resources. Dependency causes the receiver to deviate from God's perspective to the temporal science and manipulation of crass fund raising.

…fosters the potential for the need to fabricating false reports. When a ministry is totally dependent on an outside source of funds, the need to keep the donor satisfied with positive feedback often leads to reports that are less than honest or truthful. "Stretching the truth" can become a way of life.

… may frequently escalate into a spirit of entitlement. Entitlement is a subtle arrogance built on some admitted need that can, and ought, to be met by someone else. It is the ultimate in loss of responsibility and meaningful self-function.

The receiver is not the only part of the giving-receiving equation that is threatened by unhealthy dependency. Givers also experience counter-productive stewardship attitudes and habits when dependency…

…encourages the development of pride in accomplishment. A distant giver, recognizing the significance of the gifts to a ministry, can begin to see himself more highly than he ought.

…welcomes the exercise of control over the ministry. Control through giving can be experienced as dominance, manipulation, economic motivation or "spiritual bribery."

…distorts the relationship between receiver and giver. When the mutual relationship of blessing and joy is based on financial potential and need, the mutuality of the relationship suffers the restrictions of limited honesty and vulnerability.

…opens the door for the growth of a superior attitude. The ability to give, while a wonderful grace or gift, does not elevate the giver to a place in God's family above the receiver. While money is often the key to progress, it is not a replacement for humble participation in God's community.

…fosters co-dependency. When the privilege of giving becomes the major identifier of a person's value and priority system, the giver has become as dependent as the receiver.

The core corrective to this issue of dependency that so often accompanies the giving-receiving transactions is the development of local funding for all ministries. In the environment of local stewards growing in the grace of giving, the need for outside donors will consistently decrease. More importantly, individuals within the local ministry will rise to the full personal and corporate benefits of mature stewardship. This new model goal is interdependence, not dependence or co-dependence.

The new paradigm, The "Mutual Commitment" model, encourages interdependence in that each of the participants in the giving-receiving dynamic is on the same level and understands the mutuality of the process. They may play different roles in the transaction, but each one understands the equality of purpose and ministry that characterizes all participants. While the transfer of funds is the temporal content of the relationship, the true significance in the relationship is the common desire to assist each person in growth toward full stewardship maturity. God is not short of funds to accomplish His programs. He is only lacking mature stewards.

Intermediaries:

As the world gets more complex, the fund development process also takes on more complexity. In some cases it is a simple transaction between giver and receiver. In a growing percentage of cases, however, there is an intermediary person or group facilitating the funding relationship between donor and ministry organization. The intermediary is sometimes a non-programmatic staff member of the receiving organization, and at other times is an independent broker of available funds from a donor desiring assistance in the giving process.

The role of the intermediary is essentially to bridge the cultural, social, motivational or geographic gap between giver and receiver. The intermediary becomes the "point person" or the "person of contact" for both the donor and the organization. If the intermediary is a staff member of the organization, expectations and supervision come from someone in that organization. If the intermediary represents a donor or a group of donors, the expectations come from the donor side of the transaction. In either case, the intermediary can become the primary personality in the stewardship transaction. As such, he/she can be a primary determiner of the fund development model utilized. Traditionally it seems easy for intermediaries to exercise the characteristics of the "Trickle Down" model. However, in many cases they hold the key for transition to the "Mutual Commitment" model.

The recommendation of a new fund development model is more likely to receive a casual reception when there is an intermediary who does not understand the “Mutual Commitment” model. If the intermediary is only “dollar conscious” or organization- budget conscious, facilitating the dynamics of mutual commitment may be seen as too time consuming. The time assumed necessary for mutual benefit is perceived to weaken the potential for economic success. When the receiving organization and the intermediary are not on the same stewardship page, the “Mutual Commitment” model will likely be distorted and the “Trickle Down” model will naturally take over.

Intermediaries usually reflect the fund development philosophy of the organization for which they work. If the organization views fund development only from the perspective of the budget, it is likely the intermediary will exercise the traditional model. If the organization implements the new mutual benefit model, the intermediary will likely have a greater inclination to be a minister of stewardship, in contrast to a fund raiser.

In either model, the intermediary often orchestrates the style of the relationship between donor and receiver. As the gate-keeper of funds, the intermediary may

1. assume too much power.
2. manipulate board-level control of the use of funds.
3. dictate ministry priorities as a condition of funding.
4. mislead the donor for personal purposes.

The possibility of the intermediary reflecting the new mutual benefit model of fund development will be dependent on:

1. The personal character of the individual.
2. The personal and ministerial motivation of the individual.
3. The organizational environment in which the person works.
4. The nature of the supervision received by the fund broker.
5. The level of personal stewardship maturity exercised by the intermediary.
6. The history of fund development into which the intermediary fits.

Intermediaries are very important considerations in the giver – receiver equation. It is possible they are the only link between donor and receiver. As such, it is imperative that both the donor and the receiver have full confidence and trust in the intermediary. It is equally important for the intermediary to recognize that he/she must fairly and accurately represent both the donor and the receiver in all discussions and transactions. The balance between helping each party grow while at the same time protecting them from misunderstanding or abuse is often a difficult one to maintain.

The intermediary is often the initial voice and sometimes the image of either the donor or the receiver or both. Ultimately the goal of the effective intermediary should be to become transparent in order for a full relationship to develop between the giver and receiver. While the intermediary may facilitate the relationship, he/she must not get in the way of the mutual benefit that should be an ongoing experience between donor and ministry.

Implementing The “Mutual Commitment” Model:

A new model, in and of itself, does not a change make. Theory without practice is empty … practice without theory is folly.

The ultimate question asked by the “Funding Evangelism And The Mission” Lausanne Issue Group #27 is, “how does the new model make funding the mission more efficient and effective?” If the theological base for the new model is correct, as those who manage God’s resources here on earth mature in stewardship and expand the grace of giving, there will be ample resources for any “project” God desires to see accomplished. He is not short of funds … just short of mature stewards. Humanly, it may seem that His decision to trust His creation to channel His resources into “investments” that accomplish His goals is questionable. That plan, like all of creation, has suffered immensely from the impact of the entry of sin into His creation. Once His creatures became distorted in values and priorities, their use of His creation also suffered. If the management of resources can be redeemed, the use of those resources will be re-channeled into His priorities.

Pragmatically, the questions are as follows: “how does the organization build a fund development program that accomplishes the “mutual benefit” design?” “How does the mature donor exercise the grace or gift of giving in such a way that the ministry is moved to the new model?”   The crush of ministry budgets and the pressure of general funds war against the transitions necessary to reflect the characteristics of reciprocal blessings between donor and receiver. For decades the donor has been seen as simply the supplier of funds. Furthermore, for decades donors have taken a rather passive attitude toward issues of ministry outside the consistent request for more funds. Out of excess comes that which meets the needs of those in ministry who have no excess. Consequently, there is no mutual growth relationship assumed or generated for the majority of donors other than that reflected in the level of financial participation.

Several steps are to be considered as an organization makes a commitment to building a mutually benefiting fund development program.

1. Mailing lists, those cold and impersonal lists of names and addresses may be categorized or stratified differently than by giving experience or potential. If there was a way to identify maturity of giving motivation or level of growth in the grace of giving, those categories would be much more conducive to knowing how best to communicate with mutual blessing than the size of the checkbook. Other categories, such as type of ministry that interests the donor or level of personal involvement with the ministry, would assist in communications more mutually beneficial than the emotive plea for funds.

2. Communications designed specifically for various members of the family may assist in inviting those other than the check-writer. Likewise, specific communications to various professional groupings may provide information useful for stimulating the involvement of those professionals in ministry.

3. Reducing the use of exploitive and emotionally manipulative stories and pictures, without sterilizing the message, may over a period of time, provide a more accurate picture of ministry than is generated by extreme direct mail.
   Such a pattern of printed material would help preserve the dignity of those funded in needy parts of the world.

4. Patterns of communication that include more personal interaction, group meetings, conferences, mission trips, etc. will elevate the donor from "source of money" to "partner in ministry."

5. Opportunity for donors to know the challenges as well as the blessings within a ministry will provide a foundation of reality for the donors as they give and pray.

6. Accurate reporting, rather than exaggerated numbers, will encourage respect for and identity with the normal challenges of ministry. A donor funding a "quick fix" to a massive problem will ultimately be disappointed and cynical about ministry.

7. While an organization is legally accountable to its Board of Directors, a spirit of accountability to its supporting family would encourage maturity in that family. This is not a simple task. With diverse backgrounds and levels of maturity in the supporting family, the process of being accountable becomes very complex. Yet, the organization that relates to its constituency in a comprehensive accountability pattern will develop strength in that "family." When members of the supporting family assist in the design of accountability communication, the process becomes less threatening.

8. While the emotive dimension of life opens the door to funding decisions, it is the cognitive that builds maturity in all dimensions of life. The information shared between donor, intermediary and receiver should be structured in such a way that it moves both donor and receiver to a higher level of trust relationship and cognitive connection. The donor needs to be prompted in stewardship growth and ministry awareness. The receiver should consistently refine efforts to both manage and report on the management of God's resources extended to the ministry. Stagnating the donor at the emotive level of involvement is a misuse of the stewardship trust.

Conclusion:

The Lausanne Issue Group on Funding recommends a radical shift in the perspective of ministry organizations toward funding principles. A fund development program, principled on biblical truths, has the potential of freeing God's resources from the tyranny of natural human inclination. The issues of funding have more to do with stewards than with money … more to do with stewardship maturity than matching dollars to budget projections. The ultimate availability of funds to accomplish God's Great Commission is not limited by quantity of resources, but by values and priorities within God's stewards that distort His intentions for effective mobilization of His wealth.