

Asking and Receiving



Lessons from the Friend at Midnight

⁵Then Jesus went on to say: Suppose one of you goes to a friend in the middle of the night and says, “Let me borrow three loaves of bread. ⁶A friend of mine has dropped in, and I don't have a thing for him to eat.” ⁷And suppose your friend answers, “Don't bother me! The door is bolted, and my children and I are in bed. I cannot get up to give you something.”

⁸He may not get up and give you the bread, just because you are his friend. But he will get up and give you as much as you need, simply because you are not ashamed to keep on asking.

⁹So I tell you to ask and you will receive, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you. ¹⁰Everyone who asks will receive, everyone who searches will find, and the door will be opened for everyone who knocks. (Luke 11:5-10, CEV)

Our friend faced a desperate need.

Why couldn't this man wait until morning? What was the compelling reason he needed three loaves of bread right then? Was his request made so he could save face with his guest? That seems a little shallow. Perhaps his visitor had just arrived from a long journey and hadn't eaten in days. Perhaps he had small children who were crying from hunger or an elderly family member who was weak or sick. Whatever the situation, this man asked his friend because he couldn't solve the problem by himself. You probably can't write a personal check to accomplish all your ministry goals. What problems could you solve if you only had more resources? Who won't be reached if you can't move forward with your plans? What essential programs won't be accomplished without help? Why should a donor make a significant gift to your ministry? How desperate are you?

The hour was late.

It was midnight—not an ideal time to make a donor call. Rudeness and obnoxiousness are not usually desirable character traits for development professionals. However, some people are so fearful about offending a friend that they never bring up the subject of money, even in broad daylight! By going at midnight this man proved how motivated he was to provide for his guest. This was urgent. Successful fundraisers have passion to do whatever it takes to meet the need. If you're a board member who is not passionate enough about your cause to ask your friends for money, maybe you should question whether or not you should continue serving on the board. Effective board members are willing to give and to get others to give, even if it's inconvenient.

Our friend was asking to benefit someone else.

Some executive directors struggle with asking because a portion of the gift will cover their salary. They stumble over a mental block because it feels like they are asking for their own benefit. It's proper for non-profit organizations to pay their staff members. “The worker deserves his wages” (1 Tim. 5:18). Assuming that your salary isn't exorbitant, it's completely legitimate to ask for a gift. The man in this parable probably enjoyed a piece of bread with his guest, but the reason he asked for the bread was to benefit his guest, not himself. The same goes for every ministry fundraiser. The reason you ask for money is so that your ministry has enough resources to provide the programs that change lives. Keep yourself focused on the people who would be lost were it not for your ministry's impact. As a fundraiser you must avoid the love of money at all costs, because “Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Tim. 6:10).

Our friend turned to his friend for help.

If God called you to the mission field, who would you ask for prayer and financial support? The man in this parable asked his friend for help. He didn't approach a total stranger; he went to the person with whom he had cultivated a close relationship. Many executive directors have reality show fantasies of an anonymous mega-donor knocking on the door with a big smile and a big cardboard check. They'll have to keep dreaming. People give to people they know and trust. A generous donor in California has a vision to develop hospitals in third world countries. His strategy is, "I don't have enough money to build these by myself, so I have to get my friends to help me." A true friend will answer a midnight phone call.

Our friend wouldn't listen to excuses.

People make lots of excuses for not being generous. Some excuses are legitimate, most are not. The friend in this parable was no exception. He had a laundry list of reasons for why he couldn't give. "The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything." Today's donors also have a list of ready excuses for why they can't give you anything. "It's an inconvenient time." "I'm focused on other things." "I've got my money locked up in something else." Countless circumstances stand in the way of generosity. The bottom line for the man in our story was simply, "I can't." Notice that he didn't say, "I don't have anything to give you." This man had the capacity to give; he just wasn't motivated. It wasn't a matter of "I can't" but "I don't want to." That didn't deter our friend, and it shouldn't slow you down, either. You can't make anyone give, but you can pray boldly that God would compel them.

His friend gave because our friend kept asking.

The interesting fundraising application from this parable is that the friend didn't give just because he was a friend, which goes against all we know about friendship fundraising. "He may not get up and give you the bread, just because you are his friend. But he will get up and give you as much as you need, simply because you are not ashamed to keep on asking" (Luke 11:8 CEV). Asking is the key. Friendship might get you in the door, but asking gets a gift. How many times should you call? A donor representative recently made six attempts to catch a prospect on the phone. On the seventh time, the donor answered, and they had a wonderful two-hour phone call. Most people give up too early. Persistence pays.

Scheduling the Appointment

The telephone call to schedule the meeting is often the most difficult part of the stewardship process. It takes discipline to set aside time daily and weekly to be on the phone, or text or both, encouraging partners, scheduling face-to-face visits, inviting them to large group briefings, or organizing home gatherings. The most effective way to schedule an appointment is with a phone call.

1. **Introductory Letter.** You may choose to have the President or Vice President send a letter prior to your contact identifying your role in the campaign.
2. **Script.** In the telephone contact identify yourself and request the opportunity to meet with the prospect for a brief time -- usually 45-60 minutes.
3. **Appointment Times.** Offer two alternative times, such as an afternoon time on one day and an evening time on another day, rather than just leave the meeting time and date as an open option. It is important that you not ask for the gift during the telephone contact. Your purpose is to set the appointment.
4. **Place.** Ideally, the appointment meeting should take place in the prospect's home or office. Avoid restaurants because there are too many distractions.
5. **Lead Time.** Work two to three weeks ahead.
6. **Confirmation.** Following an agreement of a meeting time, confirm by handwritten note the date, time, and location to the prospect. This will reinforce the importance of the meeting.
7. **Persistence.** Call seven times. People lead busy lives.
 - a. **Don't call a prospect every day.** Try once every few days. That lets the prospect know you are serious, but still gives them some breathing room.
 - b. **Vary the time of day that you call.** Call first thing in the morning, at noon, or in the early evening. Move your calls around to increase your chances of getting through.
 - c. **Leave a voice mail.** With caller ID, donors know who is calling and will wonder why you didn't leave a message.

Sample Script

"Hello Bill, this is Fred, just checking in on you and Mary to hear how your summer is going..." Continue the conversation with some small talk to ask what God is doing in their lives. People like to share their life with you—it's relationship building.

The phone call should accomplish five goals:

1. **Thank** them for their ongoing investment in your ministry and the eternal impact they are making with people you serve.

2. **Update** them on your life and their family, church, business, children, grandchildren, and plans that involve your ministry (prayer journey, a mission trip, special event). Invite them to a special event or perhaps to host a gathering in their home).
3. **Share your Excitement** about the campaign.
 - a. A story of how your ministry changed a life
 - b. One or two key metrics that demonstrate forward momentum
4. **Offer a Glimpse of the Vision.** Share your 60-second pitch about how this campaign will make a difference for Christ. Give a 30,000-foot overview of the key reasons for the campaign and why it's the right next step for your ministry.
5. **Ask for a face-to-face meeting.** *"Could we schedule a time to meet with you and share our Gift Proposal/Case for Support and invite your prayer support and financial partnership?"*
6. **Always be upfront when asking for a meeting to talk about a gift.**
7. **Remember—the goal of the phone call is to schedule the meeting, not ask for a gift.**

Overcoming Objections

Here are the most common objections donors give as to why they do not want to meet. Sharing a gift often opens a closed door. *"A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great."* Proverbs 18:16

1. **NOW IS NOT A GOOD TIME.** (This might be a legitimate excuse. Perhaps they have an illness in the family or another important appointment.)

A: I certainly understand. We all live busy lives. I'm scheduling a trip to your area and would love to stop by and visit briefly. Could I call when I'm in town to see if you have a few minutes?

If your donor says, "I can't meet next week; I have too many work and family commitments," follow up by asking about their work and/or children, ages, etc., just as you would when conversing with a friend. This is how you'll build rapport and begin a true relationship with a donor.

2. **THE DONOR STARTS ASKING QUESTIONS.**

A: That's a great question. I would love to show you our campaign materials or our annual report and discuss your questions in depth. Could we meet on the 15th for coffee?

3. **THE DONOR ASKS IF THE MEETING IS ABOUT MONEY.**

A: It's my great privileged to meet our donors to ask for prayer and financial support for these key initiatives. I would love to come share them with you to see if there is something we are doing resonates with your heart.

4. THE DONOR OFFERS TO SEND SOME MONEY.

A: Thank you that's very kind. No need to send a gift right now. I want to come and share the exciting things going on. Would you have a few moments some time?

5. THE DONOR PUTS OFF THE MEETING.

A: This campaign is going to meet significant needs in the lives of those we serve. We have an urgency to tell our friends with the hope that they will tell their friends. I would love to come give you the inside information.

6. THEY SUGGEST TO MEET OVER THE PHONE.

A: I would be happy to talk over the phone, but some of the aspects of our campaign require a detailed explanation and I think it would be more beneficial to you if we could meet in person.

7. IT WOULD BE A WASTE OF YOUR TIME.

A: Time spent with you is always time well spent. You have been such a faithful partner; it would be my privilege to catch up and see how you are doing.

8. I DON'T NEED TO MEET BECAUSE I ALREADY KNOW WHAT YOU DO.

A: I know you have been a committed partner for years and probably know more about our ministry than I do. We have an exciting new vision and I'd love to give you a sneak peak of what we believe God is leading us to accomplish.

9. I APPRECIATE YOUR INTEREST IN ME, BUT I'M A PRIVATE PERSON AND DON'T WANT TO ESTABLISH ANY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.

A: I understand and accept that, NAME, but how could I report back on what your giving is doing and ensure that we are doing things right, while protecting your privacy? My interest in talking to you is to understand why you are involved with us and how we can make your experience with us better.

10. I LOVE YOU GUYS. THERE'S NO NEED TO TAKE THE TIME TO MEET WITH ME. I'M ON BOARD WITH WHAT YOU DO.

A: That is so good! I'm so happy we have won your trust. It would be really helpful to gain your perspective on how we might tell our story to others. Would you be willing to talk with me about how we gained your trust and how you developed confidence in our work?

11. CAN YOU JUST SEND US THE INFORMATION AND WE WILL THINK AND PRAY ABOUT IT?

A: Bill and Mary, this step of faith is so important, we feel the best way to share this information is in a face-to-face discussion. This project is important enough to the great commission and our ministry that we would like to meet you in person in your home. I know the summer months are busy. Could we schedule a time to meet in person in the next few weeks?

The Ministry Partner Visit

Esther's Golden Scepter Moment

"All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives" (Esther 4:11).

When he saw Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter" (Esther 5:2).

Then the king extended the gold scepter to Esther and she arose and stood before him (Esther 8:4).

Nehemiah's Major Donor Ask

In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, ²so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."

I was very much afraid, ³but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

⁴The king said to me, "What is it you want?"

Then I prayed to the God of heaven, ⁵and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it" (Nehemiah 2:1-5).

Preparation

Assure that the content of your conversation is donor-centered and NOT organization-centered.

Listening is your key strategy. Fundraising is an art and a science. As you prepare for your meeting ask these questions:

1. Science

- a. What have they given in the past?
- b. What have they given to others?
- c. What is going on in their life?

2. Art

- a. Who has the best relationship with them?
- b. What are they passionate about?
- c. What is the best context for the meeting?

3. Team Approach

- a. Determine who will lead and who will support.
- b. Who will ask?

Asking

The kitchen table is where true stewardship decisions are made. The unique relationship between you and your ministry partners is most evident in this personal setting. You can share the story (the capital/capacity building campaign), make a request, and ask them to become “friend raisers” by encouraging them to network with their friends. These settings are intimate, and unlike a group setting, their questions come easily and can be answered in detail.

A Conversation Not a Presentation

- 1. Relax.**
- 2. Enjoy the small talk.**
- 3. Go through your presentation/case.**
- 4. Present the commitments made so far.**
- 5. Present the budget.**
- 6. Ask boldly.**

The Request. An important aspect of the ask is clearly sharing the vision and answering every question. The “close” is critical to bringing your partner meeting to a conclusion. Ask these 4 questions of every ministry partner in this kitchen table meeting.

- 1. Will you continue to pray for the ongoing ministry and for open doors as we share this campaign with our partners?**
- 2. Will you consider a gift of \$200,000 a year for the next 5 years over and above your current level of giving, for a total of \$1 million?**
- 3. Who else do you know whom you believe may have an interest in this campaign? How could you help us open that door to an individual friend, family member, someone at your church, or a foundation/corporation/business contact?**
- 4. Have you included our ministry in your estate plan? Would you be interested in a further conversation about that opportunity? Ask for a “today” gift and a “tomorrow” gift.**

Possible Questions

1. Q: WHY NOW?

A: As we look at our opportunities to serve others, this campaign overcomes the critical ministry barriers we face. This new facility will help us reach more people more effectively. We are convinced that the hour is late, and we sense an urgency from the Lord to accomplish all we can.

2. Q: WHY SO MUCH MONEY?

A: We have carefully reviewed our needs and the space required to meet those needs. Our goal is to create a welcoming environment to solve our current restrictions and allow room for future growth. Our building will be functional, but not extravagant.

3. Q: ROI AND SROI?

A: Return on investment and spiritual return on investment are easy questions for us to answer. Let's start with the spiritual return on investment. (Add some key metrics for your ministry.) We are good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us. Our fundraising expenses are ___% of our budget, which aligns with other ministries of our size.

4. Q: WOW, THAT IS MORE THAN WE WERE THINKING OF GIVING.

A: We understand... however, this is the largest step of faith in the history of our organization. We are asking our ministry partners to give careful and prayerful consideration to possibly making the largest generous, sacrificial gift they have ever made. We are convinced that Jesus could come at any moment, and we desire to reach as many souls as possible for his glory.

5. Q: WE NEED SOME TIME TO THINK AND PRAY ABOUT THIS REQUEST FOR US TO PARTICIPATE.

A: Bill and Mary we are grateful for your past partnership and delighted that you think enough of this opportunity to take this before the Lord in prayer. Will a week or two be enough time for you to pray and decide? May I call you in a couple of weeks to answer any additional questions you may have and secure your answer and discuss questions 3 and 4? ("Who else do you know? Can we begin some preliminary discussions regarding your estate planning?")

6. Q: HOW COULD YOU HELP ME WITH MY PLANNED GIVING/ESTATE PLANNING?

A: For most of us, our largest gift may be one that we give as we graduate to glory. We have trained specialists who are experts in all areas of planned and deferred giving. They can help you by reviewing your existing plan or help you create a plan that will reflect your heart to impact the kingdom for God's glory. We can schedule a phone consultation with one of our experts.

7. Q: WHY ASK ME TO FILL OUT A PLEDGE CARD?

A: This the largest campaign in our history so we have developed a process to accurately keep track of our progress. A written pledge also helps us ensure that we fulfill your donor intentions.

Follow Up

1. Follow up as you said you would.

Research and answer any questions you were unable to answer in the meeting.

2. Write a hand-written thank you note stating their pledge.

“Bill and Mary, thanks for the opportunity for Jane and me to visit you in your beautiful home. What a unique opportunity to catch up on our lives and to share with you this exciting campaign. We trust you will give prayerful and careful consideration of our invitation to be a leader in this campaign with a 5-year commitment of \$1 million dollars. I will check back with you by phone on in a couple of weeks. Thanks again. Your friendship and partnership mean so much to us personally.

3. Document Now.

4. Always thank and report on the outcomes you promised to deliver.

Strengthening Your Relationship

Maintaining and strengthening your relationship with partners is critical for their long-term commitment to your ministry. This is not a grab-the-money-and-run scenario. It’s a lifetime of leading them from an initial gift, to sustaining support, to a major gift, and finally to a legacy gift. We have invited them to a briefing, hosted them, and have drilled deeper with the relationship. Now we must we keep them informed about how their financial partnership is impacting others for Christ.

Even if they receive monthly direct mail, you should plan 4+ additional touches a year with Major Donors on your list.

All kinds of variables can be used, but the more personal, the better...

- 1. Personal Contact** -- at their home, yours or somewhere on the road. This is not five minutes of “howdy,” but an hour or two just catching up and loving on them.
- 2. Phone Contact** -- a couple of times a year, or a couple of times a month depending on the relationship. Update them of the progress of the campaign. Share victory stories of people.
- 3. E-mail or Text** or both is another way for quick, concise donor maintenance activities. Ask for prayer, share links to relevant news and videos on your website.
- 4. Handwritten Notes and a Christmas Card**, perhaps even a birthday or anniversary card. It’s an effective way to maintain and drill deeper with each relationship.

Personalize the contact plan for each ministry partner.

Remember these Five Action Steps:

- 1. Scheduling the Appointment**
- 2. The Ministry Partner Visit**
- 3. Asking**
- 4. Follow-up**
- 5. Strengthening your Relationships**

These five major donor strategies will bind your hearts with the hearts of major donors, as you “Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way, they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.” 1 Timothy 6:18-19

ONU Possible Donor Questions

1. “Is ONU in good hands after 30 years of Dr. Bowling’s leadership?”
2. “ONU has 107 board members, are they all expected to become donors?”
3. “Will the faculty and staff and what percent will participate financially?”
4. “Is this campaign a 1-3-5 year initiative?”
5. “Will my small planned gift really make a difference?”
6. “With a campaign this size, will my campaign gift make a significant difference?”
7. “Will you keep me informed about the campaign progress?”
8. “Is Biblical stewardship being practiced by the university in this campaign?”
9. “Is the President’s weekend a wise use of time and resources for the University?”
10. “I have been asked to host a small group event in my home. How does that work?”
11. “I know the Nazarene churches are partnering with us. Are other churches being asked?”
12. “Should we be investing resources in residence halls when higher education appears to be going online?”
13. “Is ONU still training pastors, missionaries, Christian school teachers?”
14. “Can I make my gift in appreciated assets, how does that work?”