

Financing Our Faith-Centered Missions

The Home Mission Board continues to be thankful for our dedicated contributors. Through your contributions we are making a small difference in the lives we touch. Jesus stated that even a cup of cold water to those thirsty, is worthy of a heavenly reward. Jesus was saying, it is not always the amount we give, rather the giving itself that matters. We should never forget the words of the powerful dynamic duo -Apostles Peter and John. They told a man crippled from birth who Temple worshipers passed on route to prayer meeting, "Silver and gold have I none but such as I have given I unto you." We give what we can!

We Christians are challenged as never before to finance our faith-centered missions. In an age of continual cut offs and cut backs we must do what faith demands. We must finance the values we say we hold near and dear to our hearts. As much as we might seek other sources of revenue to finance our evangelism and mission ministries, our first and primary response must be our self: our commitments and convictions as opposed to hoping and praying other non-faith entities will seek common ground with our values.

We can be thankful for the rich possibilities of additional resources that are, and becoming available through our Convention's Faith-based Board of Liaisons to the federal government or private enter-prise. However, we must not use these possibilities as a substitute for what we are commanded to do by our Christ and Savior.

In Solidarity with the Savior's strong admonishment in Matthew 23:23, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law -- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former, "we must have ears to hear and respond appropriately."

We sometimes think that we have nothing left to give to the parent body, auxiliaries and, or boards of our convention. However, we would have a lot more if we take inventory of where we donate our dollars. Many of

us make personal donations annually to such places as the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the American Red Cross, the United Way, etc. We are doing so at the expense and detriment of our own Baptist convention family of ministries. Our Lord and Savior expects us to give not only to home first, He also expects us to give the lion's share of our resources to our church and convention family.

Our convention has in place the kind of financial integrity structures that should invite our confidence. It breaks my heart to see and hear our Parent body President, Dr. Scruggs stand and plead again and again for us to finance our beliefs, our values and ministries.

There are many responses we the Home Mission Board would like to make to Christian endeavors but we find ourselves saying "no" to causes and situations to which we should be saying "yes." This is true at the local church level as well. Too many Christians in local churches find financing the United Way agenda more appealing than financing the evangelism and mission agenda of their own church family. How can this be when our agenda, though similar in some sense is quite different in one major sense?

When we finance mission ministries the mouths we feed, clothes we give, temporary shelter we provide, utility bills we pay, etc. we must never forget we should be doing something of greater value that the United Way cannot and will not do. It will not seek to lead such needy persons into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. It will never talk about the kingdom of God or opportunities to work for Jesus in the kingdom. It will never talk about the gifts of grace that God gives to His own. In other words, the United Way is not Home Mission.

When we fail to finance our faith-centered values, we lose opportunities to not only help people onto their feet; we fail to assist them to step into the Kingdom of God. We lose opportunities to assist in their formation as present and future Church pastors, preachers, evangelists, Christian Educators, deacons, deaconesses, trustees, ushers, nurses, ministry leaders, etc.



Another reality at stake due to the lack of financing the values of our faith has to do with Christian Disciples for Christ. We hear a great deal about public and private Charter Schools and public or private prisons. While public schools close, how many of our churches are financing the opening of Christian Schools? Not only are Christian Schools closing, we are even losing Christian Daycare Centers. We cannot keep our Daycare Centers open because secular financing that we depended on in the past is being cut back or cut off.

At a recent Philadelphia School District Board of Directors meeting, the board passed a budget that excluded if you can believe it, teachers, librarians, counselors, the Arts, and Athletics programs. We need to see such drastic measures, along with what is happening in such places as Chicago and Detroit where public schools are closing more often and quicker than mortgage company closings on new housing loan as omens of what's to come. Things are not going to get better even though Wall Street is happier than it has been for a long time. Stock market gains are not trickling down to mission programs. So what shall we say to all these things?

In solidarity with the one we call our Savior and Lord, we must think very seriously about financing what is valuable to us because of its value to the King of us-- Jesus Christ. Jesus wants us to do what's necessary so children of the Kingdom of God can come to Him. In Matthew 25:14-15 Jesus teaches about our being given various amounts of talents or money to invest in Kingdom of God evangelical and Mission ministries.

Two of the three invested in places that brought their Investor (Jesus) the glory of kingdom gladness. One dug a hole and placed his one talent in it. Because he earned no return for His Investor, he was judged and labeled by his Investor as both wicked and lazy. What he had was taken and given to those who had done well with what they had been given.

In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus also harshly judges those who failed to deliver on behalf of the least of His own that had fundamental needs such as food, water, housing, clothing and visits of comfort. What they did they may have done for the United Way, the American Cancer Society, etc. However, they should have never given perhaps as much as they did for it was at the expense and detriment of those in need who belonged to the family of the Kingdom of God.

In these days of constant cutbacks and cut offs, I am praying hard that we come to ourselves and realize that when it comes to charity, it starts with home mission to the children of the kingdom of God and spreads abroad!

