

# How do I raise the funding?

Funding is always a challenging issue. It's something we all need, and everyone knows we need, and yet it's something we find difficult talking about. Options range between not talking about it at all, via aggressive fundraising, to self-supporting. There isn't necessarily a best option, or a right one, but the answer may depend on your theology or the attitude of the organisation you're going with. Here's an overview of some of the different approaches.

Trusting in God to provide. Of course, this term implies that the other approaches are not trusting God! But the faith approach believes that God alone needs to know what your funding requirement is, and that you don't talk to people about it. God moves them to fund you. This approach takes a lot of time in prayer, and can be a bit of a white-knuckle ride, as it often seems either God's idea of your financial needs are not the same as yours, or the people God's moving to fund you aren't listening. Tim has lived this way and not lacked for anything, and known others who have been generously supplied. Hudson Taylor pointed out that he never forgot that his children needed feeding regularly, and he had no reason to suppose that God was any different.

Scriptural models for this approach include the ravens that God commanded to feed Elijah (1 Kings 17:4), the women who supported Jesus in his ministry (Luke 8:3), and the Philippians who gave to Paul (Acts 18:5, Philippians 4:10).

Fundraising among churches and friends. This is the most common way of raising funding. It does not necessarily imply a lack of faith to approach people directly and ask for funding. It may simply be that some people need to be nudged into realising that God wants them to participate in your ministry. The widow God had 'commanded' to feed Elijah was apparently unaware of the fact till he persuaded her! (1 Kings 17: 9, 12). It feels difficult to ask people directly but they're often more willing to give than you are to ask. It's also good not to ask them for a set figure each month – let them decide how much to give you. They'll often give more than you would have expected. Be prayerful in deciding who to approach as God may have some surprises for you. Don't just approach your wealthy friends but give the poor the opportunity to contribute their 'widow's mite'. The wealthy may already be heavily committed to supporting other people anyway. And it's a lot more stable for long-term funding to have 50 people contributing £10 a month, than 5 people contributing £100. That way if one or two stop giving, it's not a major disaster.

Self-funding. Some people, particularly those who have taken early retirement, are in the fortunate position to be able to fund themselves out of their savings, or by renting out their house while they're abroad. This is an amazing privilege. However, many people in this position still need some ministry funding and can still take the opportunity to invite others to participate in their ministry.

Tent-making. The model of working full or part time in order to raise funding to support your own ministry takes its name from Paul's activity in Corinth where it appears he worked making tents (Acts 18:3). For some missions partners this may mean that they have full-time jobs and take opportunities to be witnesses in the workplace in the same way as Christians in their home environment do. The great advantage of this is that it eases the financial burden on the sending

church or organisation, and allows the individual to form natural relationships with nationals. It may be harder to get a visa this way, as you may be taking a job from a national, and commitment to the company that's employing you may mean you're not as flexible in your ministry as you'd like to be.

Whichever model you go with (or indeed a blend of them) the important thing to remember is that the money should not be the driver. You shouldn't be making ministry choices on the basis of funding possibilities, feel under pressure to report positive results when there aren't any just in case your funding dries up, or prefer some friendships over others because they're the ones that give to you.

Generally it seems that the people who have the best funding, are the ones who have a lot of strong friendships and who are heavily involved in their supporting churches. One person I met spends a week in each church she visits while on home assignment, attending every single meeting. It's hard work, but since everyone in the church interacts with her, she has a high level of support from the whole community.

Try to remember that however you raise your funding, it ultimately comes from God's generous provision. So every fundraising activity should be full of prayer, and funding successes should be cause for praise.