



# ATHENS COLLEGE *of* MINISTRY

## **Building Support for Your Ministry Training**

### **Be Encouraged!**

There is a process to raising sufficient prayer, encouragement, and financial support to enable a minister to prepare for and to engage in Christian service. Just as consistent prayer and encouragement are crucial to your ministry, consistent financial support is also necessary. Few workers look forward to the “fundraising” element of ministry. Remembering a few things may help you:

**God has called you.** Because God has called you, He also wants to provide the support that you need. You can't do His part and He won't do your part! Your job is to gather what the Lord has already provided.

**You are not asking for money for yourself.** You are quite capable of supporting yourself through secular work, but God has called you to engage in building His kingdom through ministry studies and the work of ministry. You are raising funding for ministry that would not happen through you if you were to refuse the calling on your life or a particular ministry opportunity that the Lord has set before you. Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul trusted in the provision of God that came through other people. "The worker deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). Raising support for your coursework at Athens College of Ministry vs. amassing student loans will keep you free to enter the ministry or mission field as God will direct without being burdened by unnecessary debt. Raising support for a missions trip that God has called you to is part of your agreement with that call!

**Most in ministry look back on the process of building a team as being very positive and even fun!** When others stand with you in support of God's call, there are countless kingdom benefits:

- Support raising will build your own faith and trust in God's desire to provide for your needs.
- Your raising support will strengthen the movement you are called to.
- Support raising builds you and trains you for other areas of ministry.
- Support raising creates friendships that might not have otherwise happened.
- As you raise support you will have opportunity to share the gospel.
- Raising support requires humility and promotes interdependence in the Body of Christ.
- Those on your support team can receive your regular updates about how God is working in and through you. Your testimony will build their faith!
- As you grow your support team, you are also growing the number of individuals who will contend with you in prayer for the things God is working to accomplish through you ALL.

**Partnership development is a very significant ministry (yes, ministry!) all its own.**

-Not every Christian is called to full-time ministry and/or missions work. Each one is called to do their part as God alone directs! Your invitation for others to partner with you with their prayers,

encouragement, and finances might be the very way that God wishes to connect them with his Kingdom work.

-The *Athens College of Ministry* provides a unique Christ-centered opportunity to transform communities and lives. Therefore, your opportunity to share with individuals is a chance to encourage them with God's heart, with what He is doing both in Athens and worldwide, and how they can participate.

## Steps to Raising Support

### 1. For what calling or spiritual occupation do you wish to prepare yourself?

- How is God calling you to get equipped for Kingdom service through ACMin?
- How will He use a mission trip you are called to with ACMin as part of your preparation while he uses you to build His kingdom?
- What would your ideal program of study look like if money or circumstances were not a problem?
- How do you want to serve Our Lord upon completion of your ACMin program?
- What must you do to stand before the Lord without regret?
- Write it down and pray; keep doing this until you can state your vision in a sentence or two.

### 2. Create a list of names of ever person you know. you may not ask everyone on the list, but write them down on paper or begin to use your spreadsheet.

- If you know their name and they know yours, they go on the list.
- Age, income, giving history have nothing to do with it. If you know their name and they know yours, they go on the list.
- Divide you list into three parts: A, B and C. The A group being the most likely to partner with you if you were to ask. The B group are people you're not sure what would happen if you were to ask. The C group are people you don't have much contact with.
- Create a plan to reach everyone on your list, in the most personal, practical way.
- Create a profile list to use for tracking when you have sent letters, made calls, held appointments, received support, sent appreciation notes, etc.

### 3. Pray for your names, about your calling, for wisdom, for God to stir hearts and to connect you with those hearts.

### 4. Educate yourself about partnership development, study notes, read books, search online.

-Most people do not know how to build a ministry team and unfortunately start out with less than a biblical understanding of partnership. Take time to educate yourself in the area of partnership development. If you are called to ministry or missions work, **take the time to get the right training so that you can serve a lifetime in your calling supported by God through His faithful ones.**

-Consider some the following resources:

- a) Scriptures about the gift of giving and God's perspective on our earthly resources.
- b) Books on effective support raising such as:  
*The God Ask: A Fresh, Biblical Approach to Personal Support Raising*, by Steve Shadrach  
*Friend Raising: Building a Ministry Support Team That Lasts*, by Betty Barnett  
*A Spirituality of Fundraising*, by Henri Nouwen  
*Haggai & Friends*, by Patrick McLaughlin

Use these and others to ensure that you have a Kingdom-focused understanding of how God deploys His resources. You are one of those resources!

### **5. Write your letter, one page, one side, write it to “one person.”**

-Your letter should have 4 main parts:

a) You must mention the ministry that God has called you, b) your excitement and that you are looking forward to sharing, c) you need to raise up a team for prayer and financial support, and d) mention that you will be contacting them soon to meet in person.

- *Don't use your letters or an email to ask for money or talk about how great your need is. Use your letter as an opportunity to connect, to build excitement, and to pave the way to creating a relationship with those who will support God's calling.*

### **The Contact Process**

### **6. Begin the contact process, starting with your home church if possible.**

-Only send as many letters (either in print version or by email) in a week that you can have appointments in a week. (Don't send 40 letters, you could not possibly have that many appointments. If 15-20 appointments in a week are your max, send slightly more letters than appointments.)

-Don't start sending letters until you are ready to have appointments.

-Update your tracking list as you send letters.

### **7. Make your calls to set up appointments.**

-Remember the purpose of the phone call...to set an appointment.

-Do not allow time to lapse between your letter (or email) and phone call. Start making your calls 7 days after you sent your letter.

-Call at peak times.

-Make sure you have the right person; make sure it is a good time to talk.

-Make small talk, listen well, move towards the appointment. Asking if your letter was received can be an effective way to bridge into the conversation to set up your appointment. If they have not read the letter, shut down the call and set a time to call back in 4 or 5 days. Be proactive to agree upon a time when you will call back.

-Don't tell the story on the phone.

-Be flexible, do what works for them.

-Confirm time and location.

-After the call, update your tracking list noting the appointment date and time.

-Send an appointment reminder the day before your scheduled meeting if there is time.

### **Notes:**

**Courage!** The first call is the toughest, but after that it becomes really fun. This is your chance to share a little of the excitement you have for your new ministry. This is your chance to invite your friend to talk a little more. ***Don't back away; people want to hear how the Lord is moving.*** Be sure they have heard your excitement.

**Appointments get cancelled** for lots of reasons. Don't be discouraged if you have to reschedule! Remember to give them enough points of contact and state very clearly why it is you want to meet. *If you are having trouble connecting by phone, stay with it, don't give up. Be sensitive. Don't give up.*

## 8. Go to your appointment

- Pray in advance about your calling, for wisdom, for God to move the heart(s) of the person(s) you will speak with.
- Go through your pre-appointment check list and review notes including: a) God's call on your life; b) scripture that speaks to your heart about your call; c) a description of your program of study or missions effort, d) your support-raising timeline; d) your prayer and financial needs.
- Make sure you have materials about your program.
- Make sure you have address and time.
- Go to your appointment, do not be late.
- Open your sharing time with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving for God's goodness and glory.
- Make small talk, be a friend, listen well.
- Move into sharing; you can use your letter as an outline.
- Be flexible, answer questions but stay on track, and listen well. Understand what aspect of your calling speaks to the heart(s) of the person(s) you are sharing with.
- Pray silently during the meeting.
- When you come to the point of invitation, do not draw back, look the person in the eye and ask them if they would like to partner with you in ministry - wait for the answer. **DO NOT SPEAK** until you receive the response. (Sip your beverage, bite your tongue, but **do not speak** after you have made the ask!!)
- Ask for what you want, not what you think the person(s) can or will give. Only ask for one thing at a time, don't lump several things together in one request.
- If you have made a clear presentation and invitation to partner with you in ministry there is a really good chance that people will say yes. In the event that they cannot say yes right away, then ask if you could contact them in a few days once they have had more time to pray. **Don't leave it open ended - name a day and date.** "Could I contact you on Monday the 7th? Would that be enough time for you?" Follow through on all the steps.
- If they have said **yes** to partnership **but** they are not going to start their support immediately, the above still applies. Thank them and set a date. "John and Jane thank you for partnering with me in ministry. I look forward to our partnership. Can I go ahead and start sending you my newsletter?" Then follow up the meeting at least once a month with a newsletter, card or email thanking them **and gently remind of the start date of their support.**

### Notes:

**Be sure that your visit is personal.** This is the moment that you have been working towards, don't waste it with facts and figures bound-up in a media presentation. A successful face-to-face appointment is primarily about building a personal relationship with a potentially long-term ministry partner and *inviting them to be a part of your ministry.* Take the time and talk with your prospective ministry partners about their home family, work, activities, and what they value most in terms of ministry outreach. Then adjust your presentation accordingly. Treat your prospective partners with respect; let them be in the driver's seat. Don't use strong or manipulating language but always remain proactive. Don't overly trust in your materials. Take time to talk, listen well, ask a few questions and be a friend.

**Be presentable.** Dress the part and have fresh breath. May sound silly, but this can make a difference. It doesn't mean you have to wear fancy clothes that you normally don't, but dress for the occasion. If it is a business lunch with a business person, don't show up in shorts and flip-flops.

**Proofread.** Have any and all written material on paper, computer, or internet, looked over. Be sure to spell check and have someone else review your work before you print or go public.

**Check your tools.** If you are going to use a computer or other equipment in a presentation, be sure everything is working right. Dead batteries or defective tools can reflect badly on your work. If you use this in someone's home you have to be fast with it, it needs to be working, have video cued up. And keep videos short.

**Use proper language.** Try to avoid casual slang and jargon that might be OK with friends. Avoid language that only means something to your organization. Also use "we" when presenting your work, not "I" - as the saying goes; there is no "I" in TEAM, and a teammate is what you are hoping to find.

**Ask face to face:** Most people respond well to relationship building, not as well to mass appeals. Most people will give because they are asked to. They don't mind being asked and they will really appreciate you asking them face-to-face. People don't respond well to mass marketing. On the other hand, if you build relationships and make individual appointments to share your vision with clarity and passion, a large number of people will respond with some kind of support. Face-to-face meetings are the most effective way to communicate.

**If you are afraid** to ask the support question it may be that you need to spend a bit more time with the LORD and His promises to supply our needs. If you have a biblical understanding of partnership it will be much easier to ask. Remember that you are inviting people to be a part of your team. You are providing them a way to join the Lord in what He is doing on earth. ***Many people will say yes when they are asked but very few will say yes without being asked.***

## 9. Follow-up

-Send a personalized note of appreciation thanking your prospective partners for their time to meet and for their support and/or to establish a follow-up conversation for those partners who may be praying about their decision.

-Remember to remind partners of what their giving is accomplishing; equipping and supporting you to have maximum Kingdom impact.

-Ask your support partners for referrals. You can say something like, "It is going to be a privilege for us to serve on your behalf. There is actually one other way that you could be of enormous help. Would you mind putting me in touch with a few key people who, like you, have a heart for Christ-centered Kingdom transformation? Of course there would be no pressure and no obligation for them to support us, but my job right now is simply to share the story of my calling with as many people as possible."

-Once per month, send your ministry support partners a personalized note or a newsletter, letting them know how God is working in and through you, and how you are growing in preparation for your calling. Be sure to include any specific prayer requests.

## Mistakes to Avoid

1. Starting to raise support with a lack of faith and/or prayer.
2. Telling your whole story over the phone or by letter instead working towards a face-to-face appointment.

3. Arranging meetings where you invite a small or large group of people to partnership instead of asking one-on-one.
4. Asking for finances in a letter.
5. Having low expectations.
6. Not having plan for making all your calls and appointments. Lack of diligence.
7. Making a pre-determined judgment that someone wouldn't want to partner with you rather than just inviting them to be a part of your team. Don't make the decision for them.
8. Trying to raise "funds" instead of building a "ministry team."
9. Asking for "one-time" gifts. Never use the term "one-time" gift. This implies that you will never ask them again. Ask for a "special gift" instead.
10. Busying yourself in ministry activities and responsibilities and not giving proper time to raising support.
11. Asking people to just "pray for you" because you fear asking them for financial support.
12. Thinking someone appears too poor to ask for support.
13. Thinking that letters, postcards and other materials will do all the work for you.
14. Starting your partnership development without accountability and encouragement from a coach or supportive brother- or sister-in-Christ.
15. Settling for a less than God's full provision for your needs.
16. Not ministering to your team well (lack of communication, ingratitude, lack of personal attention).
17. Not being prepared for your face-to-face meetings.
18. Overly trusting in media and other materials to tell your story.
19. Not following through on calls before and after appointments.
20. Asking groups to partner with you. Ask individuals, never groups.
21. Pre-judging people. You never know how God will work through someone.
22. Allowing emotions, circumstances or appearances determine whether or not you ask.
23. Asking for "one-time gifts." If you must, ask for a "special gift."
24. Asking for prayer simply because you lack the confidence and boldness to ask for financial partnership.
25. Fearing the word "no." Most of the time a "no" is temporal due to circumstances.

## **Practice Your Ministry Partnership Skills**

Building a ministry team is a skill; it is a skill that must be learned, practiced, and developed. Your trust and obedience in Lord is essential, but with poor skills, you will get poor results. Even though David was anointed by God to kill Goliath, his practice of his trade was an essential component of the victory. As you put into practice these strategies and techniques your skills will improve. In the preparation and practice of implementing your support raising, remember these tips:

**Record and listen to your voicemails.** As you call to set up appointments, get back to people, follow-up and follow-through, you will be leaving a lot of voice mails. Practice your scripts on yourself to critique them. How is your volume, tonality, energy, etc.? Be sure to let them know you will be contacting them soon, don't leave it up to your prospective partner to contact you.

**Practice your presentations with someone.** You will want to practice your one-on-ones presentations. Do it "live" using your tools all the way to asking them to join your team. Do it for someone who will give you constructive criticism. Also, time yourself, so you can learn to keep

within the time frames you are to respect whether it is a lunch hour or a set time at a church function.

**Role-Play.** If you have someone that knows you and your work, you can greatly sharpen your skills by doing some role-play. Have them ask questions, interrupt you, etc. so you can experience handling such things, because they will happen!

**Record yourself on Video.** You may pick up on small things that can be improved upon. Practice rarely makes perfect, and that is not our goal. Practice does bring improvement though, and will improve your results. We do this to develop our skills in many other areas, why not with partnership development?

Be prepared.

If you don't schedule your time, someone or something will.

Every goal needs a plan.

## Helpful Hints

### **Be intentional.**

Support raising is not a natural thing for most of us, at least not in the beginning. You have to be intentional about building your team. It takes time; you must set aside the proper time to get it done. Have a plan laid out for letters, postcards, phone calls and appointments that will reach all of your contacts in an effective time frame and hold yourself to that plan. You are never too busy to develop partners.

### **Be consistent and effective in your efforts.**

Abraham Lincoln is quoted as saying, "If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my ax." Support raising is a skill that needs to be developed and sharpened. It is nearly impossible to be over prepared. Take time to learn all that you can about raising support, cultivate relationships with your contact base, practice your appointments, and develop your materials.

### **Avoid bad theology:**

Currently there is a powerful stronghold on the mind of much of the church. Many Christians, including those in ministry, have a wrong concept of money, wealth, poverty, etc. Even the stories of miraculous provision that we all love can be counterproductive. **THEY ARE THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE. *Unless God specifically and clearly told you NOT to tell anyone about your needs***, you need to go practicing the biblical principle of sharing your vision and asking others to join you. Not asking is like sitting in your bedroom waiting to be beamed into to a foreign country when God told you to go. Seek out the Bible's wisdom afresh in this area. Avoid a fatalistic view of life that says, "If God provides, I will continue, if HE doesn't I won't." This bad theology often curtails the zeal needed for successful ministry work - including the area of raising support.

### **Avoid Pride:**

Simply put, many are too proud to raise a ministry team. *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble"* (James 4:6). We can try to spiritualize our lack of fundraising work, but often it is just masking pride, our independence, or laziness - all which will thwart the blessings of the Lord coming to your life, including the blessing of abundant provision. God has created the body to be interdependent, let's not draw back, let's choose to do it the Lord's way, walk in humility.

**Overcome Fear:**

This can be fear of failure, of rejection, of being controlled or manipulated by supporters, of what our family might think, fear of always being in need, etc. Fear is just a sign that we are still under an unbiblical stronghold. We need to have our mind renewed through prayer, fasting, and God's Word.

**Engage in Personal Giving:**

We also must be givers in ministry, not just receivers. We want to maintain a heart of generosity. Live with an open hand vs. a closed one. God always has more than enough. It's difficult for God to resist generosity.

**Overcome Insecurity:**

Low self-esteem leads to questions like: "*Am I and my work worth the support?*" You may have these doubts in your heart. Sometimes support raising can be reduced to hoping people will have pity on you. This poverty mentality is not productive for raising a ministry team, nor is it productive for your life. You are worthy because Jesus made you worthy! Don't disrespect His work in you! Be excited about God's calling on your life!

**Be Holy; Have Pure Motives**

We should always submit and ask the Lord what HE wants for us, including our budget and finances. There are issues that can thwart our relationship with God and affect our provision (as well as other areas of our spiritual health). "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures" (James 4:3) Even "successful ministry" can be selfish pleasure. Keep God and His Will as the center of your focus; never make an idol out of your own calling. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you sin and any areas where your life is not submitted to Our Lord. Confess your sins and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His holiness.

**Ensure unity with family or team or our brethren.** "*How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ...For there the LORD bestows his blessing ...*" Ps 133. When we walk in rightly in our relationships, committed to live the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, it opens us up to receive the blessing of God.

**Overcome Curses:**

Curses can be very real and powerfully negate your provision. Curses can be brought on personally through your own sin and neglect, be generational, or even be part of the area or people with whom you are planning to work. The good news is curses can be broken. Pray aloud in Jesus' name, rebuking the enemy in the specific area of attack. Declare aloud Luke 10:19 "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy," and John 15:7 "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

**Focus on Ministry, not Finances:**

You must develop partners to do what God has called you to, but the money is incidental. Your emphasis will be on building, maintaining, and deepening personal relationships with friends who are or who may become ministry partners--not on seeking funds.

-*Focus all of your contact time, **prior** to partnership development on building relationship.* Be sure to connect by phone, email, text, postcard and face-to-face meetings over lunch or coffee. You may invite them to see the work that you are doing.

-When you do ask for financial partnership it will be in the face-to-face meetings.

**Spiritual Warfare:**

This one is mentioned last on purpose. Many of those raising support are too quick to blame the devil! Sure, he robs and steals, but so many of us make it easy for him. It is like we leave the doors open to our house and then are upset because the dogs come in! Let's close the doors through faithful prayer and then we will be on much firmer ground to do effective spiritual warfare.

Ask God to reveal any of these areas that may be barriers to the provision HE has for you! May our testimony in the area of our support be: *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."* (Ephesians 3:20)