

Choosing a Cause and Giving Well

Part 2: Giving Well

You've chosen a cause you believe in – but are you really making a difference? There's more to it than the size of your gift. Giving well is wisely stewarding what you have and making a life impact with it. From a biblical perspective, everything you have belongs to God, and you are to steward those resources while they're in your possession – which is a process of giving it back to him. If you observe the biblical practice of tithing, please note that giving well is about giving above and beyond your tithe.

Consistently Faithful

If you make a commitment or pledge, follow through and keep your word. Consider automated giving by EFT (Electronic Fund Transfer) whether debit or credit. This assures the organization that the funds will be there when promised, and reduces administrative time and expenses. Virtually all nonprofits utilize EFT and can set up monthly, quarterly or annual contributions.

Clear Communication

Especially when dealing with smaller charities, it's essential to be clear. If you only intend to give when you receive a bonus or commission, or will give monthly but only for one year, let them know. If you must reduce your commitment, give advance warning – whenever possible, monthly donors should give 3-6 months notice and annual donors should complete a final year. If your change is permanent, let them know – don't try to "soften" the news by saying your change is temporary if it isn't. Communicate the reason for your decision, particularly if there is something the organization should correct. (And did you give them an opportunity for correction before you pulled the plug?)

Enthusiastic Involvement

If you've found your giving "sweet spot" (see Part 1) it's time to become your organization's favorite donor. When there are special events or needs, give above your commitment. If you sponsor a child, send extra cash gifts for holidays and birthdays. If you support a missionary, ask about their "wish list" – a book they'd like to read, a gadget that would make their work easier, a trip to a theme park with their family. If you had a positive interaction with a member of a charity's staff, send a Starbucks or Amazon gift card.

Generous Spirit

When you find a cause you love, stay involved and invested. Are you giving the same amount to a nonprofit year after year? Their expenses increase each year just like your own. If you receive a cost of living increase in your salary, do the same for them. When you get a raise or a bonus, and you put some away for savings and some toward a vacation, give extra to them as well.

If you are giving well, then take the opportunity to communicate with the organization about what they're doing well and where they could improve. Offer constructive feedback. And if you have expertise in a unique field, find a way to offer your skills. Let them know you're available to consult with them – a legal opinion, a technology solution, an accounting review, a seminar for their staff.

Ultimately, giving well is about far more than money – it's about giving from who you are and how you've been blessed. Life will never be richer than when you're giving well to a cause that captures your passion.