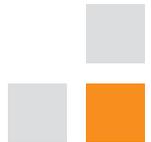




Integrating Christian Witness

Reflections on

**Marketing and
Fund-raising**



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Reflections on

Marketing and Fund-raising

Tim Dearborn



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Introduction

As a form of ministry, fund-raising is as spiritual as giving a sermon, entering a time of prayer, visiting the sick, or feeding the hungry. When we have gained the freedom to ask without fear, to love fund-raising as a form of ministry, then fund-raising will be good for our spiritual life.

Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Spirituality of Fund-raising*

We have so much to celebrate. God has gifted World Vision with a marketing staff that has extraordinary expertise and effectiveness in raising funds to fight poverty. Few other organisations experience the success with which we are blessed. We celebrate our staff's creativity and hard work, and God's great faithfulness.

The following reflections¹ invite us to address one basic but often unspoken question that deeply affects our approach to marketing in a Christian organisation: How do we do marketing so that it is good for our spiritual life and the spiritual life of those to whom we are marketing?

¹ Because of the interrelationship between marketing and business, some themes in this booklet are repeated in *Integrating Christian Witness: Reflections on Business and Micro-enterprise Development*.

We may know how to surmount the more crass temptations in marketing: measuring our worth by our performance, viewing others as competitors, manipulating information to maximise income, and seeing donors as ‘giving units’ (sources of revenue) rather than as persons to be loved and encouraged. But are we and our donors closer to God and more aware of God’s love and goodness after we have done our marketing? How do we do marketing in ways that are good for our soul? Has the vitality of spiritual life increased for those from whom we’ve ‘raised’ money?

Marketing isn’t a means to ministry— it is an expression of ministry

We do not simply do marketing in order to have money for ministry. Marketing, if done in ways that are consistent with our mission, is itself a form of ministry. Just as our faith shapes how we work to alleviate poverty and oppression, so our faith shapes how we raise money to address poverty and oppression. If not, we risk failing in our mission and compromising our witness.

World Vision doesn’t simply staff support offices to raise resources so we can do our mission in national field offices. Rather, support offices are as much an expression of World Vision’s mission as field offices. The old distinction between support and field offices is increasingly irrelevant. Every national office is seeking local funding sources – because there are people in every country, regardless of how poor, who desire and need to give. Furthermore, people in every country need to benefit from the fulfilment of World Vision’s mission.

All aspects of World Vision’s mission statement apply equally to both sets of offices. Support offices are as engaged in the ministry of ‘working with those who are poor and oppressed, promoting transformation, seeking justice, and bearing witness to the good news of the Kingdom’

as national field offices. World Vision exists to promote transformation, seek justice and bear witness in all its offices and programmes.

Marketing is more than fund-raising

Support offices contribute to the fulfilment of the mission to which God has called us. They do not exist only to raise money, generate prayer and mobilise votes on behalf of those who are poor, especially children. They exist to promote human transformation, seek justice and witness to the good news of the kingdom of God. Support offices support transformation—certainly in the lives of those who are poor and oppressed—but also amongst people, countries, systems and structures of the so-called developed world in which they work.

In marketing, we give people an opportunity to join us in the mission of God. We define our part of this through our mission statement and core documents. Neither opinions of individual staff members nor interests of donors determine this mission. Funding sources make our mission possible—but they do not define or determine our mission. Donors partner with us because of our mission.

Four implications of marketing as a ministry are woven throughout the following pages:

First, when we engage in marketing and fund-raising on behalf of a Christian organisation, we are marketing *purpose*.

Second, when we embrace marketing as a form of Christian ministry, we see it as a spiritual and not merely a financial vocation. This shapes the *process* by which we engage in marketing.

Third, as a ministry, the *product* or end result we seek is altered, for our goals go far beyond mere money.

Fourth, if the process and goals are transformed, then the *performance measures* we use to indicate success are recast.

CHAPTER 1

Marketers as Witnesses

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

To what do we witness in our marketing? In what ways are the character and nature of God reflected and honoured? Are we witnessing to God or to human need, to the sufficiency of Christ or to the proficiency of our organisation? Do we suggest that the remedy for human need is more money, greater generosity and more stuff—or do we communicate that commodities are vital yet small components of far larger and deeper needs and solutions?

In marketing, World Vision seeks to fulfil mandates to ‘promote human transformation’ and ‘bear witness to the good news of the kingdom.’ Marketing is about witness and about transformation, not just about gathering resources in order to witness and promote transformation.

Romans 12 indicates why this must be so. Paul says transformation occurs through the renewal of our minds. The *mind* he speaks of isn't the word for our centre of rationality and reasoning. Paul uses the word *nous*, which refers to the centre of receptivity where we hear and hold on to messages about what is most important and meaningful to us. Marketing is about messaging—and therefore about connecting with people's nous. If that which we receive and regard as most important isn't transformed, we won't be transformed. In every culture, the nous is continually receiving multiple messages about what is good, right and true. Globally, many cultures are increasingly saturated by the media, which virtually assaults us with an avalanche of options. When we 'market' responses to God's will and ways for people in regard to poverty, injustice and oppression, we are seeking transformation, the renewal of our minds.

In marketing, we are surrounded by the sacred

Years ago a Christian friend who is a very successful business person invited me to a meeting of several Jewish business leaders, a rabbi and the chief economic officer of the Bank of Israel. Our purpose was to discuss differences between Christian and Jewish approaches to business. These Jewish leaders' ability to discuss theological implications of business issues was stunning. If these business leaders didn't have an answer on minimum wage legislation, international trade tariffs and government subsidies of particular industries, for example, they would turn to their rabbi for theological reasoning on these issues. My Christian friend (and I) had never looked at these issues theologically, nor would he ever dream of approaching his pastor to learn the 'correct' answer. But for the Jewish business leaders we met with, every business issue was a theological issue.



I have come to believe that in a very real sense, when we are engaged in business—and in marketing and fund-raising—we are on holy ground.

1. Marketing to God's image bearers

People bear God's image – and therefore are to be treated with dignity and a sense of wonder. C. S. Lewis made the insightful observation that next to Holy Communion, the most 'sacred thing' we ever encounter on earth is the person seated next to us. As image bearers of God, there are no 'ordinary' people. Everyone is a person of indescribable worth, regardless of financial situation. We are en route to becoming creatures of unimaginable beauty and splendour such that if we saw one another now as we one day will be, we would fall on our knees in reverent awe, as Lewis noted. Or we take an opposite journey, becoming hideous creatures such as we encounter only in our worst nightmares. How we treat one another contributes towards what we are becoming. Therefore, in our marketing, what are we becoming, and what are we helping others to become?

2. Marketing for God's resources

All money belongs to God, for the 'earth is the Lord's and all that is in it' (Ps. 24.1). We are not owners but stewards of someone else's possessions. This conviction forms the foundation of biblical economics. 'The earth with all that is in it' belongs 'to the Lord your God' (Deut. 10:14). Through several parables, about the tax collectors or the tenants in the master's vineyard, Jesus drives home the point that our resources are not our own. As Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 4:7: 'What do you have that you did not receive?' Is not everything we have a gift from God?

*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it...
belong[s] to the Lord your God*

Psalms 24.1, Deuteronomy 10:14

Therefore, in humanitarian marketing we are not asking people to give away some of 'their' resources. We are giving people an opportunity to partner with us in stewarding God's resources according to God's will and ways. It is not only that we need donors; in a very real sense, donors need us.

3. Marketing in the name of God

In World Vision, we have the boldness to call ourselves Christian. Therefore, our marketing is a form of Christian witness – either positively or negatively. We bring either credit or discredit to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The software industry speaks of its marketers as 'software evangelists.' As a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation, it could be said that we are 'poverty evangelists,' or, perhaps more appropriately, 'evangelists of hope.' We proclaim good news about solutions to poverty and not primarily the heart-wrenching news of unsolvable problems and insatiable needs.

4. Marketing the tears of God

When we focus on those who are poor and oppressed, we touch the tender spot of God. God shares in people's suffering and tears. We speak often of staff capacity building, but we seldom discuss one vital aspect: If we lose our capacity to weep over suffering, injustice and the impact of evil on people's lives—especially on children—we risk becoming mere 'professionals' who have strayed from the heart of God.

A group of landless peasants in Nicaragua, approximately 100 parents and children from an area where World Vision wasn't yet working, walked 10 kilometres to meet with my wife and me in a grimy school-room. Standing against the walls, few looked us in the eye. The fortunate few who had work were lucky if they earned three or four dollars a week as day labourers on others' farms. As they despondently described their plight, a community-development facilitator who had worked to mobilise the group stood in the back, silently weeping. Later she said, 'I just wish there were more we could do.'

May God continually nourish our capacity for tears! Poverty and oppression are more than social and economic tragedies. They are outrages, grieving the heart of God. If we lose our spiritual passion and grief over human misery, we are on dangerous ground.

We are surrounded on all sides with the sacred. This sacred nature of marketing has a profound impact on who we are as marketers and on how we do our work.

5. Marketers as secular 'priests'

Theology is the study of God and therefore the study of what we regard as our greatest good and deepest value. Business persons provide society with the goods and services that the society values. Thus, in a particular sense, business persons are a society's primary theologians.

Marketers communicate what a society values and that for which it longs. They create the means for people to gain access to what will purportedly satisfy those longings. Marketing builds on—and at times provokes—desires, and then it promotes products to satisfy those desires. A religious priest stands in a similar role. As a priest stands between people and God, helping them to connect, we might somewhat whimsically suggest that marketers are a society's secular priests, standing as the link between people and what they value (or are persuaded they should value).

If the heart of marketing is provoking and responding to deep human need, then as followers of Christ we believe God belongs at the heart of marketing. God's will and ways offer the ultimate response to our need.

However, also to be found at the heart of marketing is the adversary of God, who works to turn people in on themselves, relying only upon themselves and their finances or power. People become prisoners of their own poverty or plenty, loneliness and selfishness. This is yet another reason why marketing is a very spiritual journey; that is, in marketing we engage with powers and principalities—the power of resources and the resource of power.

Therefore, prayer is central to marketing. Forces of evil seek to defile our credibility and distort our approach to money. We pray not only to seek God's blessing on our marketing campaigns, but also that we will use our influence wisely. We pray not only for success, but also that we will embody in our approach to marketing the will and the ways of God. We pray not only for creativity, but also that we will not be distracted and diverted. We pray for wisdom, not only to secure appropriate resources, but also to ensure we are appropriately responsible in how we seek them.

As 'priests,' it is imperative that marketers know clearly and embrace fully those whom they represent—both people and their deep needs, and the resources that will satisfy them. Religious priests must know the people they bring before God, and the God who longs to meet with people. Similarly, marketers must be experts both in our mission and in our constituencies.

Since priests represent people's deep longings and their 'god's' deep truths, character and conduct are integral to their witness. People come to look like the 'god' whom they worship. By looking at worshippers, and especially their 'priests,' we can gain insight into the nature of their 'god.' When people look at fund-raisers in a Christian organisation, they gain impressions of both the organisation and the God it represents.

6. Marketing requires continual conversion

For all these reasons special emphasis must be placed on the spirituality of our marketers and of their marketing programmes. We design ad campaigns, print our letters, create web campaigns, and approve articles for publication—but to suggest that we are committed to promoting human transformation requires that we be committed to our own transformation as well.

We must allow God's Spirit to convert us from fixing our minds on ourselves; on our own resources; on how society measures worth, significance and success; and instead to grow towards fixing our minds on the will and ways of God. We need a conversion—a radical change in our view of the world and approach to life—so that we can live the 'good, perfect and acceptable' will of God (Rom. 12:2).

If the suggestion made earlier is true, that World Vision's mission 'to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the kingdom' applies equally to donors as well as to those who are poor, then transformation of those from whom we are raising funds is one of the purposes of marketing. We are seeking to raise more than money and prayer. We are interested in how people vote, invest, consume and steward the environment, because all these activities have direct impact on those who are poor.

7. Marketers as prophets

All marketing focuses in one way or another on making people aware of needs and how to have them satisfied. Marketing messages proclaim, 'This product or that service will satisfy.' Our marketing of responses to poverty and oppression, our promotion of justice and transformation, our witness to the kingdom of God actually 'market' ways to satisfy people's deepest needs and longings. It is natural that some will disagree with our 'remedy' or be threatened by our descriptions of problems, needs and their causes. People will be unsettled, upset and challenged. We must not pander to or totally shape our message around people's current values. Instead, we must provoke a desire for something better.

In cases of severe malnutrition, the aid worker seeks to provoke hunger in the starving child. Mercifully, after weeks without food, a child's digestive system shuts down, gastric juices cease to flow and hunger pangs disappear. Aid workers dip their fingers in sugar water and gently place them in the child's mouth, rubbing the child's chapped lips. If a child starts crying, the aid worker knows he or she has probably won the battle against death, for crying means the appetite has been reawakened.

In our marketing, we must awaken people's deeper hungers. They may not even know they are starving. As hunger is awakened, people may cry out in pain or even anger. As we market responses to poverty, we address not only the need for survival of those who are poor, but also the need of those who are rich for greater meaning and significance than can be found in material things.

We are convinced that all people long for identity, community and significance. No one wants to be unknown, alone and worthless. Often unrecognised and unspoken, a longing exists amongst all people, rich and poor, to see sorrow consoled, suffering end, and injustice overcome. The deepest longings of the human heart are summed up in our daily prayer for the coming of God's kingdom: 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10).

Within every culture is some recognition that there is more to life than producing, buying and selling things. Humans are created to contribute, to be significant. We are designed for community. We long to make a positive difference in the world.

However, current ways in which many people are living may thwart living life as God intends. These patterns must be challenged. Enter the prophet. The prophetic ministry of fund-raising extends far beyond how we deal with our profits – how much money we give away. God is also concerned with how we earn and spend money. Thus the ministry of marketing may extend to and even challenge our vision of the world and our purpose in it.

If marketers are secular ‘priests’ in our societies, standing between people and that which they regard as needed and valued, then which ‘god’ do we serve? We are either priests of Mammon or a priesthood of believers in the Messiah. There is no third alternative.

CHAPTER 2

Marketing Vision

I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written, ‘The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.’

Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others.

2 Corinthians 8:13–15; 9:13

I. Poverty and affluence can destroy vision

A tragedy experienced by both those who are affluent and those who are poor is the death of vision. It takes at least a year to organise a new area development programme (ADP). The most difficult task isn't preparing to dig wells, eradicate disease or build schools. It is overcoming the loss of vision that accompanies poverty. Culture, context and centuries of tradition—as well as people who profit from poverty—conspire to convince those who are poor that they are worthless, helpless and have no reason to hope. Poverty has its roots in our heads as well as our finances. Community-development staff must restore vision before change can occur. Financial-development staff must do the same.

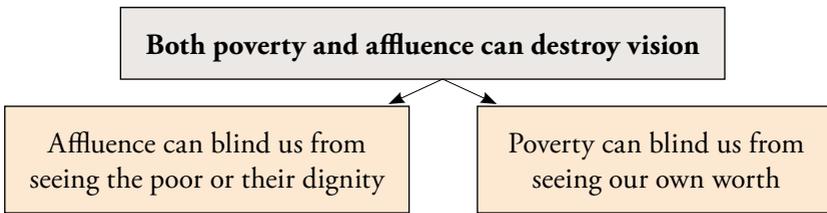
We have more than a good purpose for our marketing – we are marketing a good purpose. Our work is to help restore people's vision of the good purposes of God.

1. We provide a world vision

World Vision is aptly named. Our work is to help people clarify a vision of the world and God's purposes for our lives. We give vision—the ability to see each other and God's love for all—to both the rich and the poor. Affluence can blind us to the dignity of the poor. Poverty can convince us that no one sees us and that we have no worth and no future.

We respond to individuals' deep needs by calling people to the deep and grand purposes and resources of God. We present people with the mission and vision to which God has called humankind. We invite them to join with us in pursuit of the justice and goodness of God's kingdom.

Therefore, our marketing is more vision casting than resource raising. Marketing opens lives to vision and not just need, to hope and not despair, and to confidence rather than scepticism.



2. Restoring vision requires communicating mission

It is imperative that we clearly communicate our identity and our purposes. We do not want donors to be surprised later about aspects of our work. We want them to know all that is necessary for them to understand who we are, why we exist, and where we are going. Most of our funding sources do not give to World Vision because they share our Christian faith, but because they believe we are trusted partners in addressing poverty and suffering. This number is likely to increase in coming years. Just as we serve everyone in a community without regard to faith, so we receive contributions from all sources without discriminating according to faith. That is good. However, in our religiously divided world, our identity and commitments as a Christian organisation will increasingly become a ‘marketing problem.’ More and more donors will be concerned about any overt expression of faith in either our messaging or our ministries.

Marketers have the complex task of communicating our Christian identity and commitments to donors who may not share either. It is imperative that we communicate work with theological and spiritual sensitivity and wisdom. Donors do not necessarily need to embrace all aspects of our mission, but they do need to know of our commitment to integrate spiritual and social transformation in contextually appropriate ways. Of course we do not proselytise. And we serve all people without discrimination based on religion. But we also believe that spirituality, values and worldview are integral to development.

Donors then decide whether or not they share our vision enough to partner with us. The decision by potential donors not to fund us can actually be a form of successful marketing, for it means we have communicated who we are and enabled people to make an informed decision about supporting our work.

3. Witnessing in ‘restricted’ markets

Our witness through marketing amongst governments, corporations and people regardless of faith takes the same form as our witness through relief and development in restricted contexts. This is why our Policy on Witness to Jesus Christ mandates that all Partnership entities have contextually appropriate Christian witness strategies for all programmes. Every office’s marketing plan is expected to include a Christian commitments strategy. By being straightforward about our Christian identity and being highly competent in what we do, we enhance the credibility of the gospel in people’s eyes.

How do we market amongst those who don’t share our vision? The same policies for witness in restricted contexts apply to fund-raising in ‘restricted markets.’

Be clear:

Name our Christian identity and commitments

Be wise:

Witness to the fullest extent possible in that context

We market without arrogance or awkwardness about the centrality of our Christian faith in all that we do. We market with simple, pure confidence. We announce in our messaging, ‘This is good, and we invite you to join with us.’

II. Poverty and affluence breed lies

If the purpose of marketing is to improve vision, a vital element is dismantling lies and pointing towards the truth of God's will and ways. Lies distort vision. Merely helping people see needs and opportunities will not generate a sustained response. Rather, several deep misunderstandings must be overcome. Four lies defile the lives of rich and poor alike – and shape the process of marketing in replacing these lies with truth.

1. Overcoming the lie of ownership

None of us owns our resources. Whether we acknowledge it or not, our resources belong to God. We are stewards of someone else's things. Our possessions are not private, personal and for our own disposition. Everything we have belongs to God—who has entrusted them to us as guardians and caretakers.

Both rich and poor can be deceived into believing we own our possessions. All of us face an urgent need to give a portion of our possessions away in order to be liberated from being possessed by them. Unless we live in the freedom of knowing that God owns our resources, our things will own us. All people need to give in order to be freed from idolatry. If we do not live with this clear awareness that God possesses our possessions, our possessions will possess us.

God called the people of Israel to tithe their income in order to be protected from trusting their possessions as the source of their worth and security. God's strongest judgements against Israel focused on condemnation of its failure to give to the poor and oppressed.

One reason for giving is to protect ourselves from idolatry.

We work to help liberate people from trust in their money and material possessions. We must dethrone money, or it will enslave us. American evangelist Dwight Moody was preaching about the importance of tithing. After the service a man said that unfortunately he couldn't afford to tithe. 'Why?' asked Dr. Moody. The man replied that tithing was impossible because he made so much money he couldn't possibly give a tenth away. Dr. Moody responded: 'I'm sure God can help you with this difficult problem. I'll pray that God will reduce your income so that you can afford to tithe.'

2. Overcoming the lie of net worth

We must overcome the sinister lie that bank balances measure a person's net worth. Our things are not the source of our worth, identity or power. People without financial resources are not 'nothing,' with low net worth. People with large bank balances are not 'everything,' secure in their high net worth.

Our net worth isn't measured by investment portfolios but by our identity as children of God.

Overcoming this lie is rarely quick or simple. Think of how long it may have taken in our own life to believe that our worth is not defined by our performance, accomplishments and acquisitions. The journey of God's grace from our head to our heart is a long and hazardous voyage that takes our entire life. How hard it is for us to believe, really believe, that we are unconditionally loved by God.

During a meeting with landless farmers in Nicaragua one man uttered one of the saddest statements a person can make: 'We are nothing. A farmer without land is nothing. When we are hired we work hard on other people's land, but they gain all the profit. We are willing to work hard, but without your help we will always be just nothing.'

We assert a contrary truth. We want people to discover the biblical truth that our worth is defined by our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God. All people are creatures of unimaginable worth, unique, unrepeatabe miracles of God's creative goodness. However, there is a degree of sociological truth in the landless farmer's words. To be poor isn't simply to lack required resources for life. True poverty is to have no access to those resources. It is to feel like 'nothing' and to have no way forward. Our work is to create access, including new and restored relationships and opportunities. Without this, poverty drains all possibilities from people's lives.

3. Overcoming the lie of hopelessness

Both those with wealth and those in poverty are tempted to succumb under the weight of despair. Cynicism and scepticism press down hard. There is no way out, no hope, no options. Corruption, incompetence, trade barriers, the magnitude of need, environmental problems, systemic conflict and others' greed are ugly facts that lead to the conviction that there is nothing we can do.

Those in poverty are driven to desperation. People are tempted to believe that the only reason they are poor is because others are rich. Drunkenness tempts people as an escape. Violence and migration seem the only way to secure a future for their children. Impoverished people are willing to go thousands of dollars into debt to those who might smuggle them into the West, leaving their children behind as collateral on the loan. Parents are willing to sell a child into prostitution. Acts of sheer desperation!

Those in affluence are driven to isolation. People are tempted to believe that the only reason others are poor is because they are lazy or corrupt. Walls, security systems, higher barriers and stronger defences seem the only way to counter threats on their affluence and to secure a future for their children. Occasional acts of charity soften the harshness of life.

As ‘evangelists of hope’ we market in order to build people’s confidence in the goodness of the coming future. We market solutions and not just temporary palliatives, light and not darkness – given people an opportunity to experience in the present a taste of the coming kingdom.

4. Overcoming the lie of mere benevolence

We are tempted to believe that giving is an optional addition to our lives. Charity often occurs as a ‘surprise’ gift. It is an exceptional, superabundant, voluntary act of benevolence, giving from excess or abundance. However, we know that deep damage can be done to the character of both donor and recipient when some are reduced to beggars seeking spare coins and others are reduced to mere benefactors bestowing spare coins.

Charity is
‘grace-in-action’

Philanthropy is
‘love for my brothers
and sisters’

God’s example and God’s word declare that sharing our resources is a mandatory act of obedience and a worshipful act of love. The word *charity* literally means ‘grace in action’ and *philanthropy* means ‘active love for humankind.’ Grace in action, active love for others! When we do fund-raising, we are mobilising grace and love, not simply financial resources. Those with resources have as much need to give them as those who are desperately poor need to receive them. Similarly, those without financial resources have rich gifts to give.

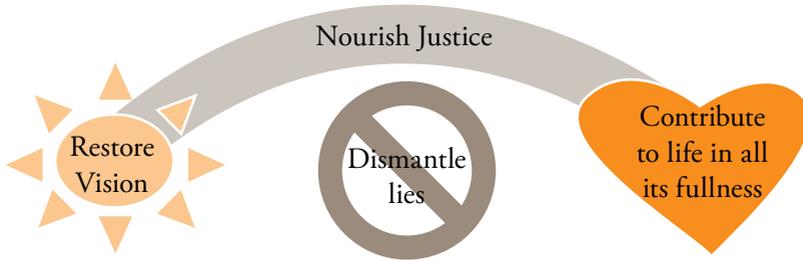
As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:7, ‘Each of you must give’—not just those with wealth but everyone. And each gives ‘not reluctantly or under compulsion,’ but ‘because of the surpassing grace of God’ (v. 14).

Our faith is tested by whether or not we are generous. God is glorified by our giving (2 Cor. 9:13). Both those with resources and those without have a need to give and to receive—not just for the sake of the poor, but also for the sake of their own souls.

Our future isn’t secured by the quantity of our things. Money is a good means to other ends but a deadly end in itself. The gospel of the Messiah gives us confidence that we can do something about poverty. We market hope—successes, solutions, alternatives and options.

III. Nourishing justice

In marketing we contribute towards life becoming as God intended it to be. We contribute to people – and especially children – experiencing life in all its fullness. If restoring vision and dismantling lies are two dimensions of the purpose and process of marketing, nourishing justice is a third.



Several particular opportunities for nourishing justice exist in our marketing as a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation.

1. Contributing to a fair balance

Life's financial balances are not fair. The most decisive event of our life is one over which none of us has any control—where, when and to whom we are born.

Where a child lives shouldn't determine whether a child lives.

One of the most heart-wrenching encounters I have had occurred in a conversation with a grandmother in an ADP. As we walked to her house, we saw a beautiful young girl swoop up a piglet in her arms and scamper ahead. The grandmother stood in front of her ramshackle house, pointed to her two daughters' houses nearby, and said, 'After my second daughter was born, my husband left me, saying "I don't want to waste my life raising daughters."' The husband of each of my daughters, after her second daughter was born, also left, repeating the pattern. As she spoke,

I noticed the nose of the child we'd seen earlier poking out between the wooden boards of the kitchen. During our entire conversation she had been observing us. Catching my gaze, the woman pointed to her and said, 'My granddaughter is 14, and after she gave birth to a girl, her boyfriend abandoned her.' The cycle continues.

My wife and I have the precious gift and privilege of three daughters. The joy of our life has been growing and learning from them. They did not choose to be born into our home any more than that grandmother's girls chose to be born in theirs. Yet the place of our birth makes such a difference. We are born into situations with unfairly balanced scales.

The result of our giving isn't simply alleviating suffering and poverty but shifting resources so that balances become fairer. In other words, the result of giving is movement towards equity—justice. Marketing is a form of advocacy. We are speaking on behalf of both those with resources and those without—inviting both to experience God's will for restored relationships and restored balances of fairness.

We are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

2 Corinthians 2:17

Marketing isn't peddling problems and soliciting funds but rather the stewardship of influence. The deepest impact of our marketing is not short-term maximisation of return on investment but long-term movement towards a fair balance. Those who are desperately poor will take whatever charity they can get, but their longing is for justice and dignity. Marketers fulfil the mandate of Matthew 6:33 'to strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness' by not simply pursuing quick charity but rather deep change.

We are agents of deep change, not only in majority-world countries, not only in our field programmes, but also in our support offices and amongst the minority who have financial resources. We are sent from God to donors and to those in poverty alike; we are not just sent by donors to those who are poor. We do not stand accountable only before donors—but also, and primarily, before God. Our ultimate accountability therefore is not to donors, or to the poor, but to God. This accountability motivates our more visible accountability both to donors and to the poor with whom we partner.

We are not simply in the business of ‘resource extraction’ from the rich in order to give to the poor. Our call is to steward influence that enhances the credibility of the gospel and moves our world towards God’s fair balance.

2. Stopping destructive exports

Most people in the world live with an integrated worldview in which they recognise that all of life is influenced by the divine. The Western world has tried for the past several centuries to separate the sacred from the secular. The positive impact of this is that people have been freed to use nature to enhance their lives rather than simply submitting to it as sacred. The negative effect is that God’s sovereignty over all aspects of life has been ignored.

As a result, societies have become increasingly individualised and materialistic. Rather than seeing ourselves as interwoven in the fabric of creation, we attempt to live as autonomous individuals free to define and assert our interests as we see fit. Rather than recognising the sacred presence of God surrounding us, we place our trust only in material ‘stuff’ we can see and handle.

This worldview pervades the church and has become one of the West’s most insidious exports. We in World Vision refuse to contribute to this export. We are committed to funding national field offices’ programmes that seamlessly integrate spiritual and social transformation. We work with governments and private donors to help them see why this is integral to our understanding of sustainable development.

Our marketing helps people recognise the intimate connection between the spiritual and the material. We work to reshape and reintegrate people's worldview to recognise that spiritual and economic poverty are interwoven and that individual and corporate well-being are inseparable.

3. Preventing 'heart attacks'

Since our heart is found wherever our treasure is located (Matt. 6:21), our heart is chronically at risk of attack if our treasure is money, material goods, or our own might. When we help people to invest their hearts in the extraordinary goodness of God's will and ways, we are protecting them from spiritual 'heart attack.'

God knows our need for security—that is why God calls us to place our trust in God and not things. God knows our need for a sense of worth—that is why God invites us to discover our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God.

Since our hearts are knit to whatever we treasure, we are at constant risk of 'heart attack' if we treasure anything other than God's kingdom.

We are increasingly finding that donors do not want to give merely their money and their prayer—they want to give their lives and time. They want to respond personally to the sufferings of those who are poor and oppressed. They want to dig wells, help build schools, lead seminars for teachers, consult with pastors and coach micro-entrepreneurs. It may be that for some people, in some places this is right, good and transformational in both the lives of the donors and those whom they serve. Having said that, we recognise hazards associated with this kind of service—risks of paternalism, manipulation and exploitation as well as more complex risks of cultural insensitivity, heightening impressions of World Vision as a 'Western' organisation, and distracting staff time from the work at hand.

However, there is another risk. We risk distracting donors from a deeper and more complex ministry of transformation to which they might be called. They can apply their skills by digging ditches, praying with children orphaned by AIDS, playing football with schoolchildren, and helping women set up small businesses. All of that is good. But their skills and energy might have an even deeper impact if they address more complex issues that contribute to poverty and injustice: structural trade regulations, global business practices, inadequate educational and health systems, and even their own vocation, personal consumption and lifestyle. Maybe donor transformation is expressed most profoundly not simply by amounts of money given, or by short-term volunteer activities, but by the ways we spend our money, consume resources, invest our talents professionally and vote. Maybe transformation is indicated by the kinds of cars we drive and the homes we live in.

Scott Rodin offers a challenging insight:

It should not be a surprise to conclude that the spiritual growth of our donors should be the primary concern of every Christian fundraiser! It is in this context that we should be planning our annual program of visitations, letters, phone calls, mailings, publications and solicitations....It is only in this understanding of the relationship between spiritual growth and faithful stewardship that we can fully embrace Christian fundraising as a ministry...We minister when we design programs that challenge our donors to more radical discipleship...How we do that, what it means for every area of our development programs must become the topic of highest priority for Christian fundraising.¹

We celebrate deep change in our relief and development programmes. May we invest the same dedication, creativity and passion as we seek transformation amongst the people from whom we raise funds.

¹ *Stewards in the Kingdom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 212.

Measuring Success

When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:15–17

How do we measure marketing success?

Of course, marketing is measured by income generated, donations received, and donor retention. Contributions are as essential for us as profits are for corporations. However, for us, income growth is too small a target, inadequate as a scorecard for our marketing.

What is on our scorecard? Twenty per cent income growth? Four-year average donor lifespan? Financial targets? What happens when income grows 12 per cent and we targeted 15 per cent? Have we failed? And what happens when potential donors choose not to give because they do not want to be associated with our Christian identity and purpose? Are there ways to measure increased influence other than through increased name recognition? What should be included in marketing strategies pertaining to stewardship of our Christian identity and commitments?

Growth in donations for non-profit organisations is like growth in profit for businesses: essential means to other ends, but an insufficient end in itself!

We know that receiving donations is no more our reason for existence than making a profit is the sole purpose of a secular business. Profit and not-for-profit organisations exist to serve communities' and people's needs. Financial profit and charitable contributions are essential means to other ends, but are insufficient ends in and of themselves.

We are not satisfied with simply putting income growth on donor-engagement scorecards. If we stop there, then we sell short our donors, those who are poor, and the mission to which God has called us.

What's on our donor-engagement scorecard?

❑ **Growth in Revenue/ROI/Ratios/Sponsorships/GIK/Yield:**

Stop here and we sell short ourselves, our donors, our mission and the poor

Support offices fulfil the same mission statement as national field offices

❑ **Promote human transformation:** Doesn't the flourishing of those in poverty partially depend on the transformation of those in affluence?

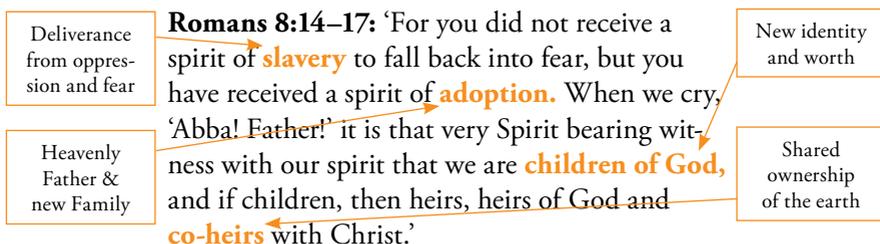
❑ **Seek justice:** Aren't there some causes of poverty that only those in contexts of affluence can address?

❑ **Bear witness to the kingdom:** Isn't God's reign of justice, peace, love and joy in the Holy Spirit needed as much among support offices as national offices, as much among the rich as the poor?

1. Quality of community

On our scorecard we need to note the quality of our relationships. We are not simply seeking contributions; we are creating connections among donors, us, those who are poor and God.

These relationships are multi-dimensional: with ourselves, with God, with others and with all of creation. Romans 8:14–17 describes the breadth of God’s transformational love in our lives:



Rich and poor, donor and recipient, fund-raiser and responder—all are joint heirs. It is not only the rich who have something to contribute, and not only their children who look forward to an inheritance. The poor also have gifts to share and their children an inheritance to receive. Our work in marketing is to make sure that all people receive their rightful inheritance as joint heirs in Christ’s kingdom—no one too much, and no one too little!

If I misspend the resources entrusted to me, I am squandering (or more literally, stealing) someone else’s inheritance. In normal circumstances that would be regarded as criminal. In marketing we help all people receive the inheritance they deserve: joy, fruitfulness, community and the qualities of life in God’s kingdom.

Henri Nouwen comments:

When it comes to a clear understanding that we are all brothers and sisters in the house of God—whatever our race, religion, or nationality—we realize that in God there is no distinction between haves and have-nots. We all have gifts to offer and a need to receive. I am increasingly convinced that one of the greatest missionary tasks is to receive the fruits of the lives of the poor, the oppressed and the suffering as gifts offered for the salvation of the rich... We who live in the illusion of control and self-sufficiency must learn true joy, peace, forgiveness and love from our poor brothers and sisters.¹

In this regard, it might be wise to change some of our fund-raising language. Are we building community, deepening dignity and honouring people when we speak of ‘cultivating’ donors and launching marketing ‘campaigns?’

We are called and entrusted to market in ways that build the dignity and worth, confidence and character of those who give financial resources and those who both receive some resources and give others (including perspective and, often, wisdom). We do not want to receive or give money in ways that damage any of the people with whom we partner. A crucial test in our marketing is whether those about whom we are speaking, writing or portraying by photo would feel valued, honoured and grateful for how we have presented them? If people in their own context read a description or appeal, would they say, ‘Yes, that’s us! Thank you for telling our story,’ or would they feel misrepresented, demeaned or in any way exploited?

According to one anecdote, a returning missionary was speaking in his home church, regaling the congregation with stories of the ‘backward’ life of the people amongst whom he worked and how desperately they needed him (and thus, by implication, how important it was for the congregation to keep giving him money). At the end of his presentation many in the congregation were moved to tears. The pastor asked the

¹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the House of the Lord: The Journey from Fear to Love* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 48.

missionary to lead them in prayer, in the native language of the people amongst whom he worked. At the conclusion of a very brief prayer by the missionary, a visitor immediately stood up at the back and spoke out, obviously continuing the prayer where the missionary had stopped, saying, ‘...six, seven, eight, nine, ten. Amen!’

In our marketing we must know and honour those whom we represent. By this, we create common ground that is not defined by affluence or poverty, benevolence or dependency, but by the love of God and the dignity of humankind.

2. Gifts donors receive

We are all needy, and we all have gifts to give. Marketing can provide a vital way to create community—an opportunity to build care, kindness and friendship. We are called to create a community defined by the resource of love rather than love of resources. Those with financial resources are in as much need of receiving love as those without. Sometimes their sense of loneliness, of being cut off from human kindness, is deeper than that of those living in poverty.

In our marketing are we guarding the dignity of those who are rich and those who are poor, and giving to all opportunities to share their gifts and receive their rightful inheritance?

Again from Henri Nouwen:

The roots of loneliness are very deep and cannot be touched by optimistic advertisements, substitute love images or social togetherness. They find their food in the suspicion that there is no one who cares and offers love without conditions, and no place where we can be vulnerable without being used.²

2 Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 16.

A remarkable report appeared in the October 2007 issue of *The Week*, a secular newsmagazine compiling stories from around the world. A door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman knocked on the door of a house in a rural part of the United States. The occupant welcomed him in, but after hearing the sales pitch said it was out of the question for him to buy a vacuum cleaner. He was suffering kidney failure, had awaited a transplant for three years, was on the brink of death and buried under unpaid medical bills. The salesman wished him well and left the house. But he stopped outside and said by his own account, ‘I prayed and felt convicted by God to do something. I went back into the house and told the man I would be honoured if he would let me give him one of my kidneys.’ Now, months later, the man who had suffered kidney failure is in fine health and says: ‘This is an unimaginable miracle. That man was a gift from God.’

Not that this should become the norm for our marketers! But I wonder, was this a marketing cost or ministry expense? It certainly is donor transformation, taken to the extreme. What about our marketers who visit a funding partner in the hospital? What about national office staff members who care deeply for donors on a vision trip, praying for them and encouraging them in their faith? Ministry or marketing?

World Vision US phone operators keep a stack of notecards on their desks. They are encouraged to pray over the phone with donors if the person to whom they are speaking indicates a desire. After the call, they invest a few moments writing a note of encouragement to the person with whom they have just spoken. Good marketing? Of course. But more importantly, it is good community.

We are on dangerous ground when we speak of donors primarily in terms of cash value, contributing lifespan and retention as an income source. We do not ‘cultivate donors’ as we would fertilise a garden. We are creating connections, building community, caring for people and assisting in their stewardship—linking them to the grand purposes of God.

3. Generating gratitude

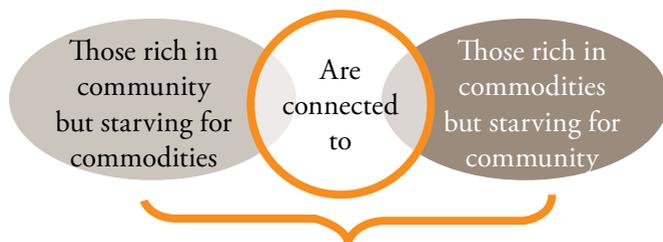
Marketing as ministry leads to gratitude. A donor is grateful for the privilege of being involved in our shared mission. Recipients are grateful for access to life they wouldn't have had otherwise. Both are grateful for relationships created and kindnesses shown. If we succeed in expressing our Christian identity and commitments, then eventually both donor and recipient will be grateful to God. All of us are set free together from the curses of despair, suspicion and cynicism.

Together we grow in trust in God's sufficiency. We find our identity and worth as children of God and stewards of the resources with which God has entrusted us.

Two insidious forms of poverty are overcome: the poverty of being without resources and the poverty of being without relation.

Those rich in community but starving for commodities are connected with those rich in commodities but starving for community.

Those who are poor in means and those who are poor in meaning all receive what they need to flourish.



Together we discover our commonalities are greater than our differences, and our dependency is more joyous than our autonomy.

Together we grow in reliance on God

We discover that we have far more in common with those whose lives and cultures are radically different than our own than whatever differences may divide us.

Years ago we took some friends who are also major donors on a vision trip to Tanzania. We had the privilege of spending several days with the Hadza, a hunter-gatherer group that is virtually without possessions. Semi-nomadic, all they own are their sticks for digging roots, bows and arrows, and knives. No cooking pots, no art, no furnishings, and until a few years before we visited them, no clothing. The lifestyle of the Hadza couldn't be more different than our own. The couple with whom we travelled possessed, by comparison with Hadza possession, unimaginable resources. But sitting around the campfire at night, telling stories, we were just a bunch of parents with dreams for our children. Utterly different in lifestyle, we were utterly similar in longings.

When we asked the Hadza elders if they dreamed for anything that they currently lacked, their reply was simple. 'First, our children need to learn Swahili so they won't be exploited by other tribes. Second, we've lost control over our land and the wildlife is being driven away. Third, the jungle is dominated by evil spirits that threaten our life.'

When we were packing our vehicles to leave, shoving in tents, cots, sleeping bags, portable showers, cook pots and duffle bags, the Hadza stood around in stunned amusement. Finally an elder said to us in complete sincerity, 'Why do you need all this stuff?' Good question! I'm deeply grateful for this contribution of the Hadza to my life!

And the point of all this?

We keep ourselves resolutely focused on our mission lest we be distracted by great opportunities to raise funds. Our vision is one in which every child experiences life in all its fullness and every person is determined to make sure this happens.

Years ago Abuna Manuel, a Roman Catholic priest in Gaza, sent World Vision a request, as part of project work in Gaza, for playground equipment. We were somewhat perplexed by the questionable priority of toys in a context where children desperately need food, water, fuel—not to mention security and justice. In a conversation with the priest, he made a remarkable comment: 'The children of Gaza have forgotten how to

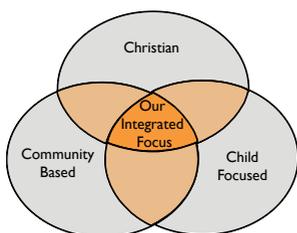
play. Play is the gate to laughter. Laughter leads down the path to joy. Joy opens the door to hope. Without hope we have no life. Without life we resort to acts of desperation. We must help the children of Gaza to play again.'

How do we measure success?

We measure success the same ways we measure a relief, development or advocacy programme.

Are we living from our integrated focus?

Integrated Focus...



'We are among the poor as an act of obedience and discipleship. We are not present among them to "demonstrate" how good we are; we are to live out our dependence on God and commitment to glorify Him among the poor.'

—Jayakumar Christian

Christian: We are Christian. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ. World Vision serves alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God's unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Are we acting according to our principles?

Tackle the spiritual and social causes of poverty through the empowerment of people for engagement in relief, development and advocacy in ways that are driven by ministry priorities and the Spirit rather than money and ambition.

Specifically, as marketers, has our approach to fund-raising

- helped alleviate suffering, addressed its causes, furthered justice, promoted human transformation and witnessed to God's kingdom?
- drawn people closer to God, to one another and to lifestyles and work that reflect the calling of the kingdom?
- nourished amongst all partners (donors and recipients) confidence in God's good purposes and deep love, and God's ability to work through all partners to contribute to the flourishing of the world's children?
- enabled both donors and recipients to give and to receive?

The ultimate measure of the ministry of marketing is deep change in our lives—donors and recipients alike; deepened relationships creating a quality of community that transcends culture and context; and joyful hope as we live in anticipation of God's good future. God is good, and we can face the future with grateful confidence. We have the privilege of being used by God to provide the world today with clear evidence of the coming kingdom of God.

Additional resources:

John Frank, *The Ministry of Development* (Dallas: EDM Press, 1996).

Henri Nouwen, *The Spirituality of Fund-Raising* (New York: Henri Nouwen Society, 2004).

Scott Rodin, *Stewards in the Kingdom* (InterVarsity Press, 2000).

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Chapter 1

1. Donors as well as those who are poor are 'sacred' image bearers of God. How does this truth affect the way we relate to them?
2. How does the truth that marketing is a ministry and not just a means to raise funds for ministry affect our approach?
3. What are some issues and opportunities raised by the assertion that marketing has a prophetic role?
4. How does the truth that everything belongs to God shape our approach to marketing?

Chapter 2

1. Are we helping people to embrace giving as an act of justice, not simply one of benevolence?
2. Are we investing in stewarding our influence within society or focusing only on immediate return on investment?
3. Are we helping people understand the role of spirituality in poverty, development and stewardship?

Chapter 3

1. Have we placed on our scorecards the quality of our relationships with donors and recipients?
2. Are we carefully guarding the dignity of donors and recipients in all our marketing?
3. To whom do donors and recipients give thanks?

About the Author

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