

Is Giving to a Cause, Not the Church, Even Biblical?

“Millennials want to give to a cause.”

Heard that one? Of course you have. And it’s true. Just not the whole truth.

Here’s all of it:

EVERYBODY wants to give to a cause.

It’s just Millennials who are holding the church accountable to having one (which, I might add, is a good thing). So how have many responded in a knee-jerk fashion? By creating “boutique” giving options that offer channeled, specific giving to direct “causes” that bypass the general operating budget of a church or nonprofit.

So instead of giving to a general operating budget that might result in, say, a desk or a laptop or a 401K for field workers (no “cause” there, right? Just that damnable, wicked, evil “overhead.”), you can give to drilling a specific water well outside of Lusaka, Zambia that will serve 112 AIDS orphans.

Pure, unadulterated “cause” giving.

So quick, which one do you want to give to—the “overhead” desk or the water well?

And all God’s people said, “Water well.”

Here’s the problem. That water well won’t be dug without a desk. Meaning a person on the field, in that area, serving as a liaison between your money and the actual completion of digging that well. Not to mention identifying the AIDS orphans who will be served.

The desk IS the water well.

How do I know?

To carry our example out, I personally traveled to Lusaka, Zambia. Our church had just sponsored hundreds of AIDS orphans through a relief organization, and I wanted to see where our money went.

Yes, it dug water wells. Yes, it gave blankets.

But I walked away with a deep, deep realization that none of it would have been possible without the staff and infrastructure of the organization on the ground making it happen. They were the ones living with and serving those orphans. Funding them was every bit as important as anything else. Maybe more than anything else.

We simply must grow in our maturity in understanding that we can't just "give to the cause" as if only the water well – or blanket, or goat, or meal, or roof – is the cause. The "cause" is everything that serves the cause, enables the cause, funds the cause.

So what's the real problem with Millennials – or anyone else – who want to give to a cause?

Casting the vision.

If the people in your church do not feel like your church represents the cause of Christ in this world, the solution is not to offer alternate causes to gain their attention. It's to cast the vision of the church as THE cause of Christ (which, I might add, it is) and how it IS on the front lines of engaging those in need around the world.

If people do not think giving to your church is giving to a cause, they need cause-lessons.

And you need vision-casting lessons.

As for my tithe, I am happy for it to go to the general operating budget. I am equally as happy if it pays the light bill, funds a retirement for a staffer, or yes, buys a desk, as I am if somehow that particular set of dollars gets to an AIDS orphan in Zambia.

Why?

Because in one way or another, it all gets to that AIDS orphan.

And maybe that's what all of us – Millennial or not – need to understand.

> [Read more from James Emery White.](#)
