

Steven D. Reece

From: Steven D. Reece <sdreece@matzevah.org>
Sent: Friday, April 20, 2012 08:28
To: Bruce and Jane Mussey; Daniel Compton; JoAnn Siegienski; Kevin Little; Robin Park; Slawek Laskowski
Cc: Chelsea Bennett; Elaine Brown; Monika Radkiewicz (Yahoo); Rachel McRae; Robin Park; stephen.folker@lawrencedrive.org; Wes Plunk
Subject: Funding and Faith

I am writing to outline a rationale regarding funding and faith.

First of all, concerning the issue of seeking a grant from the Natan Foundation that I have placed before us, the board generally has not clearly spoken to the issue. At best it is neutral on the issue in that I have heard from only 4 of 6 (I am not including myself) board members, who have expressed opinions about seeking funding from the Natan Foundation. Of the four who have commented, 2 have been against, one cautious and one uncertain. From our advisory board, one member has advised against moving in this direction.

Second of all, the problem is we need funds to operate. Do we trust God enough to allow Him to bless us as He wishes? This is a matter of faith. God cannot bless us if we do not ask, if we do not seek. I feel that we should seek any and every opportunity that is presented to us, especially if we think that we in at least some way qualify for a grant from a particular organization. How do we know that God wishes to use a particular source to bless us as a means to bless others unless we ask, seek, and knock (Matthew 7:7)? In faith therefore we must act.

Thirdly, this is not an easy matter to navigate; however one thing is clear. The IRS has determined that we are a PUBLIC CHARITY and has classified us accordingly, which means that the PUBLIC can support us. By God's sovereignty, we are NOT a church or a Christian non-profit although we state that we are a Christian non-profit in our literature. Maybe we should say that we are a public charity founded by a group of Christians? Why? We are an organization that has been established by Christians and recognized by the IRS as a Public Charity. Even as a public charity, certainly we may operate from the perspective of a Judeo-Christian worldview, which allows us to determine how we function, by what values and ethics we function and by which principles we choose to function. All of this is up to us; nevertheless, we have other funding issues to consider regarding how Jews might perceive donations we receive from Christian groups or groups like Jews for Jesus. We also must consider how churches or individual Christian donors might view Jewish support.

As a public charity we occupy a middle ground, a neutral place between these two opposing groups. Since we are a public charity, we have our answer. We can take funds from the public, both Jew and Gentile; however, we can reserve the right to accept or decline funding from the public based on whether or not there are any strings attached.

Fourthly, I believe that we must be careful about the issue concerning from whom we accept funding. We must remember that giving is oftentimes an issue of the heart. We are looking for hearts that are inclined toward us or with whom we have favor. What we are expressing is God's love in a tangible way. People will resonate with what we are doing at the heart level. For me this is an indication that God is at work in their lives. I would ask you to read Luke 7:36-50 in which Jesus was anointed with oil by a prostitute. Jesus did not object to and received what the prostitute did to Him as an expression of her love and gratitude toward Him. Simon, the religious leader, condemned Jesus for his actions and looked down upon the sinner. Are we

responding like Simon in this passage? Can we accept this type of gift from a sinner, who wishes to express tangibly their gratitude and love for what we are doing? If not, would we be prideful by not taking funds or a gift from a sinner?

I understand our battle. I personally realize that the money first and foremost belongs to God and He can choose to bless us through whomever He wishes. My faith is strong enough to realize that we are seeking to penetrate a lost world and God will bless us how He chooses. For me the key is that we have established as Christians a neutral platform that will allow us to connect with Jews and Jewish organizations, as well as, churches and Christian organizations, who resonate with what we are doing.

Lastly, do we trust God to bless us through both “good people” and “bad people” meaning through sinners and saints? Beggars cannot be choosers and humbly speaking I am literally a beggar. God has placed me in a position in which I am totally and completely dependent upon the goodness of others. In other words I am helpless and unable to do what God has given us to do without the financial support of others. My faith allows me to “pillage the Egyptians” and not worry about the implications because I know that if anyone funds us, the desire to do so is of God and He has placed it in their heart. Some people may not see it that way and that is okay. I am not pushing an agenda; I am trying to learn how we can fund our foundation at this time through grants, and other funding, which as you know is not an easy matter.

I believe that God has placed us in the public sphere for a reason. We need to be open to sinners who want to bless us much in the same way that Jesus was open to the anointing of a prostitute. This stance may and probably will offend some. If so, so be it. I am willing to pay such a price in order to allow others to see God’s love through us and come into contact with Him through His Son, Jesus.

For these reasons, I have decided to move forward with the Letter of Inquiry with the Natan Foundation. They may categorically deny us, but if they do, it will be a good way to learn.

Blessings,

Steven

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