



Dear Friends,

In the summer of 1973, I found myself in a most uncomfortable position—in more ways than one. I was lying on my face in the gravel of the garden of a Japanese youth hostel, wondering what passers by were thinking. I was not alone. There were about 60 other YWAMers with me who comprised most of the YWAM leaders at the time. Loren Cunningham and Joy Dawson were leading the session in which God had spoken to us about "robbing Him." The scripture that had been burned into our hearts was Malachi 3:9 "You are under a curse, the whole nation of you, because you are robbing me." God was specifically dealing with us about misusing designated funds. He saw it as robbery and we knew we were in big trouble!

Every person there repented of at least one specific financial transgression and we spent several uncomfortable hours in deep conviction. At the end of the afternoon the heaviness of conviction was replaced with the joy of forgiveness and cleansing. We had all learned a lesson we would never forget.

In my case, I had to repent of sloppy accounting that led to wrong decisions. A few months earlier an anonymous donor gave us a gift designated for buying a mini-bus. The gift was generous, but not enough to buy the vehicle so we put it in our bank account and prayed that God would provide further so we could make the purchase. The weeks had rolled by and we ran out of money for food and rent and, because we had not set that money aside, it was spent. I was vaguely aware that we were in danger of doing that, but our accounts were not up-to-date and I did not know when we began to spend the money that should have been set aside. Though I was not the accountant, as the leader I was responsible for our financial decisions.

Please distribute this latest letter from Lynn as widely as possible among your YWAM staff and students - make copies to hand out, or post it where everyone can read it. We would like to make Lynn's teaching letters available to everyone in the mission. Please translate if necessary, and do send a copy of your translation to: ict@oval.com to be posted on our website.

Thank you!

The International Chairman's Team



THIS LETTER IS ALSO AVAILIABLE AS A PODCAST ON WWW.YWAMICT.ORG

That was a long time ago and there have been many other lessons learned since then. Sometimes I forget that God had to use hard and dramatic circumstances to teach me this and other lessons. I can begin to assume that every YWAMer who makes financial decisions will somehow understand the important principles of integrity in money matters. But in recent months, God has sent us a clear word of conviction that we have fallen short of what we perceive to be God's standard for financial integrity.

Much could be written on this subject, but I want to concentrate in this article on a few of the most important subjects for YWAM leaders. The first one is related to my opening story –keeping good, clear accounts. When Loren and Darlene first sent my wife, Marti, and me out to lead a team they only gave us a few instructions, but one was, “Keep clear, thorough accounts! Marti [who had been Loren’s secretary] can do that, but as soon as

possible you should put someone else in charge of accounting. You need to keep yourself from any accusations and if your wife is in charge of accounts, you won’t be safe enough.” We were careful to do that.

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GOOD ACCOUNTS

Keeping a good, up-to-date set of accounts in YWAM is a walk of faith. You have to ask God, and believe that He will send you people who can do that. This is the responsibility of the leader and of high priority.

I know the consequences of not having a bookkeeper. Likewise, I know what happens when the bookkeeper you do have is not competent. Under either of these circumstances you don’t have the information you need to make good decisions and that leads to poor stewardship and even “robbing God” by misusing money.

Sometimes YWAM bases do not have an accountant and so they hire someone to keep the books for them. In my opinion this is okay for a while, and is certainly better than no one doing the accounts but this is not best practice; it should be brought “in-house” as soon as possible.

PROTECTION FOR LEADERS

Many of the best financial practices are designed to provide protection against accusation and temptation. Both of these are issues worthy of serious thought. For example, it is wise for a leader to set in place procedures that prevent him or her from making solo financial decisions. I make it a point to have a person of good character and strong personality present for any non-routine financial decisions I make. That person has access to all accounts and is familiar with the overall picture so they are able to be a check and balance for me. It is sometimes frustrating to be convinced that some expenditure is important only to find that you cannot convince the person to approve of it with you. If this situation

arises you might even need someone else to act as a third decision maker in this process. Even if it is inconvenient to include others we still need to avoid making major financial decisions on our own.

When I first joined YWAM in the late 60s and early 70s if I had to attend a leadership team meeting or had to travel with an outreach team the cost of that came from my own support. After the first few years, as the costs were steadily rising, and the need for travel increased, all of us in a leadership role were struggling financially. We talked and prayed together and decided with much caution that, where possible, "obligatory travel" would be met by the bases we had established, usually through tithes or other giving.

However, once you start that procedure it becomes very difficult to know where to draw the line. If I, as the senior leader, have those expenses met what happens when there are three or four –or even 15 or 20 –people on the base who have "obligatory travel" expenses. There are no easy answers, and any policy about this will need to be reviewed and changed on occasion. That process of review will need to be open and transparent.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency is an important guiding value when it comes to financial stewardship. I find it useful from time-to-time to ask myself the following question: "Have I made any financial decisions that I would not want staff, students [or supporters where applicable] to know about?" I should always be able to answer that question with a resounding NO. That means I have no "special accounts" that I benefit from or that are used solely at my discretion.

It is also wise for a leader or team of leaders to have regular meetings where the finances of the base or team are explained to the staff, where questions and discussion are encouraged. If this doesn't seem like a good idea to you, I suggest you ask yourself why.

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PUBLIC AND LEGAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In most countries YWAM has to be registered as a non-profit or a charitable non-governmental organisation. Those countries that provide for such registration will have regulations that require independent, annual audits for any such organization with substantial income. Even if you are not able to incorporate in that way [because of being in a restrictive country for example] or if your income is below the amount where an audit is required it is still wise to have an independent review done by someone with financial abilities. Every YWAM operating location should be able to point to someone of good reputation and financial skill and reasonable independence to vouch for the truthfulness and accuracy of the accounts.

RESPONDING TO ACCUSATION

Finally, if anyone does happen to accuse a YWAM leader of mishandling money, that leader should not have to defend themselves. He or she should be supported by their leader and the person or company that performed the audit or review. Of course a leader can only appeal to others to defend them if they have been open about the finances and made the accounts available to others' input. YWAM leaders should never find themselves in a position where they are under accusation over financial matters and have no one to defend them.

If, after an accusation has been examined, that process confirms that a leader has misused finances, it must be taken very seriously. The leaders of that leader must immediately take action to right that which is wrong, make restitution where necessary and restore that leader to full fellowship with the body of Christ.

In a recent prophetic word given to us, lack of financial integrity was listed as one of the main reasons that God has not kept His full anointing on Youth with a Mission. If we are going to come back to a place of authority and powerful anointing then we must realign ourselves to His ways in every part of YWAM, especially among leadership.

I would urge you to give careful thought to the principles I've outlined above, evaluate how your base or team is doing and if you are responsible to other leaders sit down and talk this through with them. Let us all come back to a place of financial transparency and integrity.

In His Peace,



Lynn Green

Storehouse Fund

For many years we have had a Storehouse Fund that has been used in the event of emergencies. These occasions have arisen many times in recent years and the funds are too low to be of much help. Now, the Global Leadership Team of YWAM and Team 3 (John Dawson, Iain Muir and Lynn Green) want to breathe new life into the Storehouse Funds.

For more information go to: www.ywamict.org/?page_id=24

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