



046: How-To Raise Support Through Storytelling – Heather Ricks

Heather Ricks, together with her husband, Jason, has been raising support for nearly 20 years. Since returning from Ghana, God has been using her to train missionaries on the support-raising journey. She teaches people how to share their stories to create an atmosphere of worship that invites them to participate in God’s work here and around the world.

Heather has published a book called [God and Elephants: A Worshipper’s Guide to Raising Support](#), and has launched a non-profit called [StoryONE](#).

You’ve written a book about storytelling and fundraising called, God and Elephants: A Worshippers Guide to Fundraising. Tell us a little bit about what lead you to write this book.

- I wrote this book several years ago, because I trained missionaries to raise support. I found that people had a lot of trouble sharing their stories – when they got into fundraising conversations they would just focus on the money.

You have this tagline: ‘worship-focused support-raising’. I think we’re all familiar with the idea of support raising in missions, but unpack for us a little bit what you mean by worship-focused support-raising.

- Most people think of money when they think of raising support – this is obviously the need and we often focus on getting as much money as soon as possible. We see it as a task that must be done before we can be used by God.
- I believe there is a much deeper purpose for raising support – what’s missing in a money-centered scenario is that we are created to glorify God in everything we do. That isn’t just a suggestion, it’s a command. 1 Cor. 10:31 includes fundraising.
- When people are consumed with the pressure of raising money, they can be crushed.
- When we focus on worship we recognize that He is our great provider. God asks us to operate out of trust. This frees us up to look at this journey of fundraising from a whole different perspective.
- It should be set up for both the giver and the receiver to be worshippers.
- I help people discover their God-stories and worship Him and in turn they can share their stories about what God is doing and invite others to join them in following God.



You zoom in on the idea of storytelling. Why is storytelling so important as a part of support raising?

- The beautiful thing about a good story is that by the time you get to the end of it, the stage has been set for you to know the heart of the main character. When you put this into the context of raising support, I want to read 1 Corinthians 3:18 for you. This verse tells us that because of God’s mercy our lives are being molded to reflect His glory.
- God’s glory needs to be reflected as we are the light of the world as we raise support.
- The support raising journey provides an excellent opportunity for us to discover His beauty. Each person on this journey holds a key to help others discover God’s heart for the world.
- How do people back home discover the God of the nations? Through the stories of the missionaries – they bring God encounters to life for our home churches.
- The support raising journey is already set up for storytelling. During the initial fundraising, the missionary has the opportunity to share with many different audiences like one-on-one conversations, talking to small group gatherings, and speaking in front of congregations on Sunday mornings and mission boards. When missionaries get to the field they have newsletters and blogs.
- If the focus is only on raising money, newsletters get reduced to business reports and family updates. The focus is on us, not on God and His heart for the nations.

Would you describe for us what it looks like to use storytelling in fundraising?

- I have people ask the question, “Why are you here?” They look back and see how God has worked in their lives up until now and I help them use these to write their God-stories so this is the focus of their fundraising conversation.
- I teach them how to use a hook to draw people into their story and weave in the facts so that God is the one who is seen, not them.
- A hook is a word or phrase that immediately draws people into the story.
- Focus on one theme – stick to one thing that God is doing and build your story around what God is doing there.

Why do you think it is so hard for us to stop telling the “what” instead of the “why” of our stories?

- We have very short attention spans – look at social media!
- People get stuck with this quick idea of shooting something out.

How do social media and the hook relate to each other?

- In a story, I try to help people draw the attention to God immediately.
- In social media, the focus is on ourselves. It’s all about us.



If we get to practical advice and we think of a listener who might be preparing to go out as a missionary, what advice would you give to them?

- Tell people to use this time that God has given them to prepare their hearts for the field.
- The time leading up to departure can be so busy – filled with packing, saying good-byes, meeting with donors and churches – but this is a precious time that God has given us to focus on Him and see what He is doing.

If we change our audience to a pastor or a mission committee, what advice do you have to offer to them as they engage with this story idea?

- It begins with the relationship between the missionary and the mission committee and if it's built on trust and accountability.
- A mission committee back home can't tell a story about God at work in the field if they don't know the story. So, communication is vital.
- It's so important for the home churches to discuss with the missionaries what they expect right from the beginning so they have a relationship rather than a business agreement. This gives the missionaries the freedom to share their stories rather than just giving a business report.

What resources would you recommend to our listeners?

- [Word Painting – Rebecca Mcclanahan](#)
- [A Spiritually of Fundraising – Henri Nouwen](#)

You've also launched StoryOne – how does that fit with what we're talking about here?

- Stories give us the foundation to worship because they draw our attention to God.

If our listeners would like to learn more about you, how can they do that?

- www.story-one.org
- [@StoryOneSupport](https://twitter.com/StoryOneSupport)

“God is doing a work in your life to prepare you for ministry. The support raising journey is an act of faith that God uses to transform us into His likeness.”

