A MISSION AGENCY BOARD DEVOTIONAL

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A few blessed thoughts at the start of a meeting tick the boxes for evangelical piety, but I'm not convinced that they do much to shape the way that our organisations function.
Category: Observations

I've gone on record as saying that having a short "spiritual" bit at the start of board or church meetings is not ideal if we then switch into "business mode" and make no reference back to what was in the devotional itself.

With that in mind, here is a suggestion of a devotional that could be used to shape meetings.

> *I thank my God every time I remember you.Â In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joyÂ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,Â being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*
>
> *It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in Godâ€™s grace with me.Â God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*
>
> *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,Â so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,Â filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus ChristÂ â€“ to the glory and praise of God.*
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> *Philippians 1:3-11*

This passage could be read at the start of the meeting and some time could be spent considering the following questions:

- Who are our partners in the gospel, including those we serve and those who enable our ministry?
- Are we thankful for them and do we pray for them regularly?
- Do they provoke joy in our lives and do we look on them with affection?

Some time could then be spent in prayer for some of the organisation's partners.

Paul's prayer for the Philippians is for their spiritual health and growth. During the rest of the meeting, the board should keep this in mind and consider how their actions contribute to the spiritual health of those they work with.

Perhaps the board could use this question as a background to all of their discussions: *What do we need to change so that we can be an organisation that values all of our partners and truly cares for their spiritual life?*

I realise that this might seem overly pious to some. After all, the job of the board is to make sure that the budget is set correctly, that the organisational risk register is up to date and so on. The thing is, this only applies if you take an approach to life that draws a strict separation between the physical and the spiritual. While this might be the way that much of Western society operates it is not the way in which the Bible views people. If we take a holistic view of our work and our partners, we will need to be more "pious".

In today's jargon, the Philippians were financial supporters of Paul's ministry. However, Paul's concern is not to maximise their donations or to see that they get a return for their investment. He cares for their spiritual health. To be honest, this may not be the best fundraising strategy!

Setting a budget is not simply a financial exercise. It is primarily a process of deciding what the organisation's priorities are. Well, I would argue that those priorities should emerge from a process of reflection that includes significant reflection on Scripture.

There should be a seamless flow, back and forth, between devotional time - Scripture and prayer - and the more business-orientated bits of the meeting. A few blessed thoughts at the start of a meeting tick the boxes for evangelical piety, but I'm not convinced that they do much to shape the way that our organisations function.

For more thoughts about how agency boards can shape their meetings see my booklet The Way Forward.