[00:00:00] Well, hello everybody and welcome, to your first seminar on Facing the Finances. My name is George Herrera and I am part of the group that's come here, the Lions. and I'm excited to be here. this is my first experience and encounter with maritime ministry. I literally did not know that this was even a thing until two weeks ago.

[00:00:25] So I'm not an expert sailor. but I can honestly tell you that through the conversations that I have, I've had last night through some of the things I've seen online and, and, you know, off of this morning. I just want to tell you guys that what you guys are doing is absolutely incredible. I think that you guys are pioneers.

[00:00:40] I think you guys are entrepreneurs. I think that God has a calling on your life. God has a plan and a purpose for your ministry, and I believe that people's lives. We'll be changed and transformed through faith in Jesus Christ through your ministries. And I just wanna encourage you guys to just keep going.

[00:00:55] and I hope that this morning will serve you as a bit of encouragement, to hopefully just, bring finances a bit together. I. I'm gonna share with you my story of finances. Gary mentioned that I, my ministry is video games and I actually did the Lions program, so we're part of the Lions, which is a Christian pioneering entrepreneurship program.

[00:01:16] So, I'm from California. I originally moved to England in 2017 to go to Bible college, and I was studying to be a youth pastor, so I was studying youth ministry and it was during my time, in my undergrad. I felt God really speak to me and call me into a video game ministry. And being in Bible college, they don't teach you business skills.

[00:01:40] They don't talk about entrepreneurship. They don't talk about finances or any of these things. so what I did, the pathway for me was, to kind of, I was part of the Church of the Nazarene, and so I pitched it to the region. they flew me out to India. Literally, probably six months after I got this calling and I go to India, never been to India before.

[00:02:04] and I had probably like five or six boardroom meetings in 24 hours. It was like a video game, like I had to defeat one boss to get to the next guy, to get to the next guy. And finally I meet like the last guy, Steve and I pitched my idea to make a video game about Jesus, to tell children and young people about the gospel.

[00:02:23] And he asked me, he's like, how much money do you need? I told him I need a million pounds. And he is like, okay, cool. He's like, that's easy. We could do that right now. Boom. Got the funding. It was a miracle. Genuinely was, right. So I go back on the plane back to England and I'm doing back flips and I'm like, this is it.

[00:02:40] And you know, salary for me for the next five years, you know, we're gonna make the video game. And for me, this entrepreneurial journey, I was like, this was quite easy. Right. the problem was, is that two weeks later, COVID hit. I get a phone call from the same guy and he's just like, I have to pull all of your funding.

[00:02:58] We're literally having to Western Union people money in that region in order for people just to just survive and buy food and water. From that point on, I joined the Lions program and the Lions program was something that I, where, somewhere where I found encouragement in Gary, and the other people, and it just really helped me.

[00:03:16] Through the process of being an entrepreneur to getting my project off the ground after Covid, I pitched the project again. It got funded again, and probably two years ago, we released a video game called The Journey of Grace that teaches young children about God's grace. within the first two months, we had over 10,000 downloads globally, seven different languages.

[00:03:36] We had over 200,000 hours of game time. There's only 9,000 hours in a year. So that tells you how many, like how many hours young people were being discipled and being taught about Jesus. It was an amazing thing, and it was halfway through that project that I started what I'm doing now, which is Victory Gaming.

[00:03:54] It's a Christian eSports league, so I use competitive video gaming as a connection point to tell children and young people about Jesus. Same thing that you do with your boats. I just use video games. And it works really, really well. It's loads of fun. That is my main job. So nowadays I just get paid to play video games.

[00:04:12] I absolutely love it. My wife is not too happy, but it is fun and it's effective and there's a lot of fruit. Three days ago we had a tournament, and we had probably a, a, this was a small tournament. We had a hundred people. None of them are Christians. 15 of them accepted Jesus at the event because we share the gospel, we do response.

[00:04:32] And there was one, young woman who she, she accepted Jesus into her life. and when we, you know, kind of went up to her for prayer, she said that she had recently had a miscarriage. and so our team was able to pray with her, listen to her, and just kind of, you know, walk through that pain. so it's an incredible experience.

[00:04:49] I absolutely love video game ministry. If you guys wanna find out any more about video games, come and chat to me afterwards. But today we are here, to talk about finances. And the way that we're gonna do this is kind of two part session, right? First we're gonna look at the way that I look at, it's through, through the Bible, right?

[00:05:10] I'm gonna draw biblical concepts that kind of will align with, first we're gonna look at Paul intent making, right? You guys, I kind of feel like that's very parallel with you guys. You guys own both, but you need money. Some of you guys have a lot of skills that you can apply. So that's what we're gonna look at first, is that, okay?

[00:05:27] So. We're gonna be looking at the Apostle Paul's ministry and his trade. Can I get the next slide, please, Cameron? Now, while Paul is rightly remembered as a preacher, church planter and theologian, we sometimes forget that he was also a tent maker by profession. In Acts 18, one through four, the Bible says this.

[00:05:48] After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met with a Jew named the Killer who had become, who had recently come from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tent maker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Paul did not just preach, he worked not as a side job, not as a distraction, but as an intentional strategy to fund his ministry, to build credibility and avoid placing financial burdens on new believers.

[00:06:18] His work and his mission were not at odds. They were integrated. Paul's tent making shows us that funding the mission doesn't always have to come from the outside. Sometimes it's about recognizing what's already in your hands, your skills, your experience, your trade, and asking God how he might use it. So today, let's ask the question, what does tent making look like in modern maritime ministry?

[00:06:44] Can I get the next slide, please? I think that the first thing we have to do when we start to apply this concept is to identify your trade or your skill. Just like Paul had a trade, you have gifts and talents too. Paul's example calls us to think practically and creatively about sustainability in ministry.

[00:07:03] So let's explore how we can apply this model today. just the, the same way that Paul had, talents, you guys have talents too. So we'll just kind of go through this list of things here. some of you guys are like mechanics. Some of you, I'm, I'm guessing everybody here has sailing skills, right? but these are some practical ideas that we very quickly came up with.

[00:07:25] You can offer boat repairs, sailing lessons, or consultancy. If you have teaching experience, you can develop a course or a workshop, either in person or online. Do you have craft or tech skills? You can create and sell maritime theme merchandise or devotional products? That's just a few things that you can do in your ministry.

[00:07:43] Can I get the next slide? The other thing that we can look at here is some potential income generating ideas. You can charter your boat for guided prayer cruises or scenic tours. Offer team building sessions for businesses on board with the spiritual twist. A lot of you already doing this run youth sailing or discipleship camps charging a fee while still keeping a ministry focused.

[00:08:08] Or you can host maritime ministry retreats for pastors or Christian workers needing rest. Can I get the next slide? I like the digital income streams. I think that we kind of live in a day and age where, if you have a boat, you could rent it out to people and they could probably do like YouTube stuff or Instagram stuff or tiktoks.

[00:08:31] And I think that's a very quick, very easy way to make money. And I think that that is not something that a lot of people have tapped into. So if you have a vessel. You can definitely promote yourself with that intention, and I think you could probably make some money off of that. Just like Paul wrote, letters from prison, you can reach far beyond your boat through technology launch a YouTube channel teaching maritime safety or spiritual reflections at sea.

[00:08:58] There's a guy on YouTube, he, I forget the name of the channel, but it's like, he takes on the role of a father and what he does is that he teaches, I guess, kids or young men. How to do basic DIY things at home, simple repairs. And he, it's very simple, like, you know, how to level, a washer or a dryer, how to fix a leak.

[00:09:21] a linky, a leaking faucet, and he just put, puts those videos and he has millions of views. I think that if you guys kind of approach. Some ideas like that, you would get a lot of traction. Your brand and your ministry would be exposed to a completely new audience, and that would help the ministry grow.

[00:09:42] and the reason why I say that that's a good opportunity is, again, I've never heard of maritime ministry. I work with young people. I'm, I, I've been a youth pastor. I do ministry in church. But if there was more social media exposure for what you guys do. I think you guys would just explode with like so many more customers, a lot more discipleship, a lot more opportunities.

[00:10:02] you could also use things like Patreon or stewardship to invite people to, to partner with you and support you. you know, I use, stewardship. Have you guys heard of stewardship? Stewardship is a website that is, it's kind of like a middleman. So sometimes people want to give me money and they ask me, do you have a stewardship account?

[00:10:20] Stewardship is literally they send the money to stewardship. Stewardship sends it to me. But stewardship legitimizes the personal support that people give me because they're a trusted brand, they're well known and they're reputable. So they won't send me the money directly at first, they'll send it to them and then they will send it to me.

[00:10:38] they're literally just a middleman. But, a lot of funders in, in the UK at least, they will not give you money if you do not go through stewardship. So in January I received a, you know, I received a couple, I always put in grants and I received money from grants, but there was one in particular. They literally gave me 10,000 pounds, sent it to stewardship.

[00:10:57] Stewardship sends that directly to my bank account. And that's just so that I can continue to play video games. you can publish eBooks, you can, or have devotionals inspired by life on the water. I think you guys really have a well of experience. And stories of ministry, of encounters of lives being changed and transformed at sea.

[00:11:23] And I think you guys need to share those stories. People want to hear those things. I want to hear it, but I think that those things have not really been put out there. I think it's a, it's a really good opportunity. Can I get the next slide please? Social enterprise or bi-vocational work, you can, you know, probably most people do this work part-time in a local business or set up a marine based social enterprise that hires and trains local youths.

[00:11:46] You can also apply for funding through community development or vocational training grants. This is something that in England you could very easily do. you can use chat GBT and you could just kind of explain what you do with your ministry. And tell Chad, GBT Find me grants and Chad, GBT will give you a list of grants that you can apply for if you're a registered charity.

[00:12:08] And even if you're not a charity, you could still apply for money. 'cause there are, there are trust and grants that give to people who are not charities. There's many, many opportunities out there. Can I get the next slide please? So let's have a group discussion, right? You guys. I think are your own best resource, not what I'm talking about up here.

[00:12:29] I can give you really quick, good, practical opportunities and options and things to think about, but I wonder if there's people here today that you know, you guys can kind of lead each other, talk to each other. I'd like you guys to get in groups of five, six. Talk to each other and maybe ask the question, what skill or resource could you leverage like Paul, to support your ministry?

[00:12:51] Some of you already doing it. Share your experience. Share what you're doing currently with the other people around you. Talk about the ups, talk about the downs, what's working, what's not, and then we'll come back. Is that okay? Cool.

[00:13:09] Okay folks, I hope, I hope those conversations were insightful. and I hope you guys have had a chance to connect with the people, sat around with you. And I just wanna give you one key takeaway on this first part of our session.

[00:13:30] Can I get the next slide please?

[00:13:35] So as we reflect on Paul's tent making, here's a key takeaway that your work is not separate from your calling. In fact, your work can be your calling when it's surrendered to God and aligned with the mission that he's placed on your life. Paul never compromised the gospel by working. If anything, his work amplified his witness and expanded his reach.

[00:13:58] He simply used what he had. So today, ask yourself what is already in your hands? Is there a trade, a skill, or a service that you've overlooked that God is waiting to breathe life into? May you see your work not as a burden, but as a blessing and an open door to minister to people in ways that only you can.

[00:14:19] So let's be like Paul, not waiting up for the resources, but becoming the resource itself God uses to fund the mission. Can I get the next slide? So this second part, what I want to talk about is strategic partnerships. So I used to work at a bible college, and it was during my time at the Bible College when I started working there at the, marketing department.

[00:14:41] The college would under recruit, and probably lose 200,000 pounds a year for three years. So when I came into the marketing department, like what they were doing was just not sustainable in any way, shape, or form they needed to recruit. One of the ways that, we filled that gap of 200,000 and actually exceeded that was through a partnership.

[00:15:02] So what we did is we found local bible studies from churches. Created a partnership with that local church and said, Hey, once they finish your program, can you point them to ours and bring them at least through the one year certificate program? This way you'll have people who are trained in ministry, who are trained to do better volunteer work, and hopefully it will just engage more in church life overall.

[00:15:26] And we established several partnerships across the country. So much so that the college actually started making a surplus. Of a ton of money, through strategic partnerships. Like I said, I run a, a video game ministry. I have a partnership with a company called Chill Blast. Chill Blast is the UK's biggest gaming PC manufacturer, so I don't pay.

[00:15:48] For the video games, I don't pay for the PlayStations, I don't pay for the computers, I don't pay for the desk, the mice, the headsets, the keyboards. I don't pay for any of it. Our sponsors come and they gift us everything, and what we do is we play the commercials and we give 'em a shout out on social media.

[00:16:06] That is a huge partnership that sets me above and beyond my competitors. But is also one of the biggest reasons why people come to our gaming, tournaments is because we have really good stuff. And the, the strategic partnership that I want to look at through the Bible is Solomon. So often Solomon is looked at as kind of like a lone figure in the Bible.

[00:16:28] He's Israel's greatest king, the world's greatest king. This is true. He was anointed King Solomon for a very specific purpose. The reason Solomon was anointed king is because he had to build the temple. To build the temple is a huge, huge task. It's like building the great pyramids of Egypt. What we have to understand is that Solomon did not do this on his own.

[00:16:52] Can I get the next slide please? So we've just looked at the Apostle Paul and how his hands on work help fund and sustain his mission. Now we're turning our attention to King Solomon and a different kind of strategy, which is partnerships. When Solomon set to set out to build the temple, he was embarking on one of the most ambitious sacred projects in history.

[00:17:16] And while he had wealth and wisdom, he also knew something else that he could not do it alone. In One Kings five, one through 12, we see Solomon reaching out to King Hiam of Tyre forming a partnership that would supply the materials, the materials, labor, and expertise needed to build the temple. He room supplied Solomon with all the cedar and Juniper logs that he wanted.

[00:17:42] The Lord gave Solomon wisdom just that he had promised, and there were peaceful relations between Hiam and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty. Solomon's wisdom was not just theological, it was practical. He understood who to partner with, how to negotiate and when to seek help. His collaboration with Hiam was strategic, mutually beneficial, and God honoring.

[00:18:05] For us in ministry today, this teaches a powerful lesson. Sometimes the provision God sends comes in the form of people, partnerships, sponsors and collaborations. Can I get the next slide? So some modern day applications for, you guys I think could be this, right. Solomon's Stories offers us a template of strategic spirit led partnerships that can fuel ministry growth in sustainable ways.

[00:18:32] So I listed a few right here. You guys can partner with local businesses, approach local marine supply stores, food vendors or tour operators for sponsorships or discounts. Offer mutual benefit. their support for your ministry equals their name promoted in your events or on your vessels. Host a sponsorship sponsor, a trip campaign where businesses can underwrite fuel or supplies.

[00:18:58] Can I get the next slide please? You could also collaborate with churches and Christian organizations. I think this is a really good opportunity. You can invite churches to adopt the Voyage or Outreach project, partner with denominations or mission agencies that support maritime outreach. Collaborate with your ministries for discipleship programs on your vessel.

[00:19:20] I think that a non-denominational church, if you guys approach them, they would jump. What you guys have to offer. I know if you came to my church, they would absolutely love the opportunity to take some of our young people out to sea. And just to learn what you guys are doing, the trick is finding the right church.

[00:19:41] Right? So you have to find a church that has a good youth group, that has a church leader like Gary, who's a visionary, who's not afraid of these types of things, but they have money. They will pay you per young person to take 'em out on this trip. These are things that are very easily achievable. Can I get the next slide please?

[00:20:01] Another way that you guys can partner is with government and community grants. I think you guys can look into STEM or outdoor educational grants if you work with youth. Apply for heritage, environmental, or social impact grants, especially if your ministry has educational or community benefit. And you guys should consider registering as a nonprofit or charity to qualify for more funding streams.

[00:20:26] Can I get the next slide? I think this next one you guys kind of already do. Cameron, can I get the next slide please? Thank you. You guys can build regional networks, right? I think I. I'm new to this. I know we're gonna talk about these things later on tonight, but if you connect with other Christian boat owner owners or maritime ministries to share resources and plan cooperative outreach form, regional associations or fellowship groups for mutual support, shared funding, and larger scale impact and digital media.

[00:20:59] Digital and media collaborations. Partner with Christian influencers, bloggers, or videographers to tell your story and increase your visibility. Co-create content devotionals, YouTube series, podcasts with other ministries or creatives. You know, my friend over here told me he plays a piano. The first thing I know you, this probably wouldn't be your thing, but the first thing when you told me you play the piano, I, I could imagine you on the boat playing a piano, not a big piano, like a little piano in the sunset.

[00:21:30] That's amazing. Is it on Instagram? We need.

[00:21:38] I would love to see that. I would love to see something like that. That is something that I would follow.

[00:21:46] That's cool. So that is something that I would follow. That is something that I would share. And the thing that you guys have to understand about those things, right? It, it maybe it sounds empty to have followers to have a email list. It's not. If you have a email list of people who follow your ministry, if you use the correct email marketing strategy, you should be able to convert three to 6% of the people on your email list into customers.

[00:22:11] Does that make sense? So if you have a hundred people on the email list and you have a product that you want to sell, you start sharing that product and your email list, you should be able to sell three to six of those. If you had a thousand, that's a lot more. If you have 10,000. You can make regular income simply with the people that are on your email list and the products that you are trying to sell.

[00:22:30] So there's a theory that if you have, 10,000 people on an email list and you have products, you have a business. And that is very true. That's a general rule of summit marketing. If you have a email list, if you have followers, those people don't think of it as like a vain thing. I want people to follow me.

[00:22:47] Those are customers. All of those are people who can donate to you. Those are people who can give to your ministry. Those are people who can share, even if you just want to do a devotional and you wanna share the word that God has given to you, you need these things to amplify and to grow your ministry.

[00:23:03] It's really important to understand those things. Can we get to the group discussion please? next slide. So again, can we get in different groups now? So let's, let's move around different groups. What local or regional partnerships could you build to strengthen or support your ministry or if there's anything else within that?

[00:23:22] it doesn't have to be local or, regional, but is there partnerships where you are at, with secular businesses that you could actually use to help your business grow? Use my example. I, I do Christian video games. I use a secular gaming PC company. They are my number one providers of equipment. They give me probably 50,000 pounds worth of computer gaming kit for each tournament that I do.

[00:23:51] What could you guys tap into who could bless you in the secular to help build the kingdom in maritime ministry? Can we have a chat about that? Is that okay? And let's move around. Let's move around. Talk to different people.

[00:24:08] Folks, if we could start to wrap up our conversations. We're getting to the end of our session.

[00:24:23] I hope you guys have had good conversations. I know we had a good conversation over here, talking about digital media and the process of YouTube and things like that. talking about partnerships as well, but I'll close with this. I just want you guys to remember that Solomon did not try to build God's house alone.

[00:24:42] He used wisdom, humility, and relationship to invite others into the process, and that is the key. Partnership is not a weakness, it is wisdom. In your ministry, God may have already placed King Hirums around you. People, churches and organizations that are ready to help you build, if only you will ask. Do not let pride, fear, or isolation keep you from seeing the divine alliances that God wants to form through you.

[00:25:13] Because when we bring our calling together with others resources, skills, and networks, we do not just build projects. We build kingdom legacy. So I know that some of the stuff we've been talking about today is very entrepreneurial, very business talking about money. I know some of you might not be used to these things.

[00:25:30] Some of you are. I just want to encourage you guys, keep going for it. Keep doing the work that God has called you to do because the most important thing is that people enter the kingdom. The most important thing is that we see people's lives changed and transformed through Jesus Christ, and that actually people deepened their relationship with the Lord.

[00:25:47] And I believe that you guys are already in that good work. So I just wanna say thank you and bless each and every single one of you. Thanks. Thank you.

[00:26:00] That's wonderful. Thank you so much, George. That was hopefully very informative and helpful and it's great to have you with us, George. It's really, really good to bring your experience and wisdom.