



# Depth Perception™

Commentary from Design For Ministry™  
Milwaukee -Philadelphia -Tampa

## Hairy Donations 30 January 2004

A Hindu temple recently received some publicity because of its brisk head-shaving business. The story should capture the attention of any ministry leader who wants the next generation to be as generous toward God's work as previous ones have been.

At this temple, many women worshippers shave their long tresses in gratitude for what the god Vishnu has done for them. The temple then turns this harvest of beautiful hair into wigs and hair extensions that are sold round the world. The temple turns a substantial profit.

The account I read insinuated that this might be an injustice. So many of these women are impoverished and receive nothing from selling their treasured hair. Yet it was admitted that the temple uses the proceeds to improve the quality of life in communities where many of these women live. These improvements could not have been achieved via donations from meager incomes. The gift of hair made it possible.

Stewardship educators have long noted that since World War II, funding appeals have become cash-centered – so much so that donating time, labor or personal possessions are often turned away as inferior.

Yes, in more recent years there are more appeals for donating property or used autos or eyeglasses, but the centers of worship are not the ones making those appeals. In fact, in our experience with church capital campaigns and annual spending plans, donating skilled labor or one's time seldom appears on the menu.

Could it be that in turning away widows with their pennies -- or long hair -- we are further removing giving from gratitude? Could it be that we are on such a journey of affection toward the moneyed philanthropist, that the greater joy found in worshipful giving is being lost in our spiritual communities? Giving is not just for those who can afford it. And the greatest joy in giving is for those for whom it is a sacrifice.

-mark I. vincent