



The Pause Button

Calling "Time Out" Helps Families Make Better Giving Decisions.

By Albert J. Mueller

Why do you hit the pause button on the car CD player when you're looking for an unfamiliar address? So you can concentrate. The pause button comes in handy when you need time to pick up the phone, answer the door or just have a moment to think.

When you are being asked for a major gift by the senior leader of an organization, consider hitting the "pause button" before answering. Here are some examples of pause buttons you can hit that will give you time to wisely consider the request:

1. **"I will consult with my spouse and get back to you. We always make major giving decisions together."** This lets the leader know that you and your wife take giving seriously in your relationship. This allows you to benefit from your spouse's wisdom and intuition about the organization, its leadership and the project's potential impact. The spouse will feel honored and valued by being included in the decision-making process. "Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." (Ephesians 5:33)

2. **"Our family has a foundation and next time we meet we will consider your request. I don't have the authority to act on that without their approval."** This "pause button" communicates your desire to have structure in your giving and that you involve family members and/or board members in the giving decisions. Using a multitude of counselors allows giving decisions to be looked at from a variety of perspectives. The challenge is to balance the input from the group and make timely decisions while keeping the members satisfied that their voice has been heard. Group decision-making can be especially frustrating for busy entrepreneurs who are used to making quick decisions independently. "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22)

3. **"We will prayerfully consider that request and get back to you."** While we should pray about every decision, this pause button is often used without following through. How many times have we

told someone that we will pray about something and forgotten to actually take that specific request to the Lord. There is no doubt that God wants our giving decisions to incorporate spiritual wisdom and discernment that comes to us from prayer and time in the Word. This is a valuable pause button if we actually follow through, hear God's answer and act obediently on it. "Pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

4. **"We love you and your organization. Would you contact our professional advisor and provide them all the information they need to help us make the best decision on your request."** Hitting this pause button lets the organization know that you take the stewardship of God's resources seriously. You want to make well-informed decisions that involve your intellect as well as your emotions. You want to make sure the organization has carefully developed a plan to use the funds for maximum impact. You have employed a team of professionals to allow you to give confidently, to increase the probability of successful outcomes and to see measurable impact. "Since you excel in so many ways--you have so much faith, such gifted speakers, such knowledge, such enthusiasm, and such love for us -- now I want you to excel also in this gracious ministry of giving." (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Using these "pause buttons" allows the family to carefully consider the potential impact and probable success of each proposal. The family uses its intellectual capacity as well as its emotional and spiritual resources to make wise giving decisions.

The most enjoyable gifts that families make are to projects that they have the most confidence in and see measurable results. Hiring an outside professional can significantly increase a family's level of confidence and provide evidence of changed lives. Hitting the "pause button" avoids making purely emotional giving decisions and provides the time necessary to give confidently. Give yourself the gift of time and confidence when facing major gift decisions. Use a pause button.