

Should Telethons Be Re-run?

TV telethons have become a staple of Christian broadcasting networks. Nearly all non-commercial networks do them, and they're a key way to motivate viewers to support their programming. I'm not against telethons, and I'm wide open to any good idea what will help finance better programming. After all, everyone from causes like Muscular Dystrophy, to Public Broadcasting does them regularly, so whatever you may think of the concept, it seems to work.

The question I have is: Is it acceptable to re-play or re-run telethons? After all, it's about raising money, and in the vast majority of telethons, there are "live" elements like telling us the amount of money that's coming in, the number of callers, and some even have live graphics telling you how many phones are busy, or clocks counting down to the total. (Remember the classic thermometer?)

Of course all of these techniques are designed to increase the urgency and drive people to the phones to give. However, when the show is re-run, all those numbers, amounts and requests aren't true anymore. Essentially, are they raising money on false pretenses?

Plus, it opens the door to a lot of confusion on other issues. For instance, recently Trinity Broadcasting Network announced that Paul Crouch Jr. was leaving the network. But by replaying an apparently old telethon this past week, we see Crouch prominently on the stage throughout the broadcast. That leaves a lot of questions in people's minds. What's the truth here?

I'd love to hear your opinion. I'm not even getting into the questionable theology that you hear on some networks, stretching Scripture to encourage people to give. Maybe we'll talk about that some other time. And as I mentioned, it's not

the concept of telethons that's being questioned here. I'm cool with that. It's just the idea of re-running something that's already happened for purposes of raising money.

Am I making a big deal out of nothing? Or should television networks—especially Christian television networks—have more integrity and give us the real scoop on how they raise money?