

The 15 Offerings of Summer:

How to Reverse the Summer Slump

in 60 seconds

by

Mark Brooks

The Stewardship Coach



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Why You Must Have a Plan for the 15 Offerings of Summer

Why should you start thinking about a summer giving plan? Let me give you a few reasons.

1. **The past history of summer giving** – A look at your past summers will show you how challenging it is to make your budget in July. Only dumb people don't fix what happens every year. You are not dumb.
2. **Increased competition, lake, beach, sports, etc., leading to declining engagement and participation** – Out of sight and out of mind. Less attendance/engagement means fewer dollars coming in. Don't let Mickey get God's dollar!
3. **Already behind in giving** – If you are more than two to three weeks behind in giving, I strongly recommend you do something to head off the summer slump. Summer won't magically close the gap; it will only get worse.
4. **You don't have a strong fourth quarter.** Some churches can run a week or two behind knowing their last few months will be strong enough to carry them through their budget year. It's always better to be ahead.
5. **You want to stay ahead** – Well, who doesn't? It takes continual work to assure your church's financial stability.
6. **You want to connect your summer vision to giving moving everyone up the generosity ladder.**

So, pretty much every church should have a summer giving plan!

When it comes to a giving strategy, it pays to think seasonal. In my gazillion years of ministry, there is one thing I can count on. *Every* summer is a challenging giving time. So, I work to help you plan ahead of time. Because, after Easter, we have four challenging months ahead, and we need a strategy to stay on the road connecting people to Jesus and making disciples. The last thing you need is a lack of funds to do all that exciting stuff this summer.

Let's get ahead of the curve. When I know there is a curve up ahead, I plan my driving accordingly. Summer throws us a curve when it comes to giving. You just need to know how to hit the curve that is thrown at you. Here is how.

First, determine what you need. For instance, let's say your annual budget is \$520K. Thus, you need \$10K every week to make that budget. For the 15 summer weekends, you need \$150K. The equation is Annual Budget divided by 52 equals your weekly need. Multiply that by the 15 weekends of summer and you have your summer giving need/goal. But hitting some arbitrary number won't mean anything or motivate anyone. How do you motivate them?

By building out a message and strategy around each week's offering from Memorial Day to Labor Day. My strategy, in a nutshell, is to take at least 60 to 120 seconds before each offering, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, to motivate people to be faithful and stay faithful in stewardship with their generosity. I want you to create a worshipful moment each week. While the focus is on a moment in worship, the actual giving might occur across many days and via multiple means.

Now that you know how much money you need this summer, it's time to start thinking about a plan to head off any summer slump in giving.

Let me share with you what I call **The Three Keys for Summer Planning** – They are:

1. Set the Vision for your summer giving initiative. Every appeal needs its own vision that drives a donor to give you more. I will be writing more on this in next week's edition.

2. Build the infrastructure required for a successful summer giving initiative. I'll share on this in another Coach.

3. Prime the pump to assure a successful summer giving initiative. This recommendation comes in two parts.

Leaders First! Most of your money is coming from top donors. That is why it's important to gain their support for your plan. I'm going to be writing on this soon!

Make May a push for setting up recurring giving. COVID-19 taught us that the offering is 24/7 and beyond the walls of our buildings. I push for recurring giving two times annually, in January and in May.

The 15 weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day will determine how the rest of the financial year goes. The amount of thought, work, and prayer you put into summer giving planning will determine the results of these fifteen weeks.

What should you be thinking and doing now to prepare for your best summer of giving? Here is what I would focus on.

Get your team on board. Your biggest challenge will be your staff. I'd start by letting them read my materials. If we are ever going to change the conversation about stewardship, it must start with our own staff/teams. If your staff or leadership is not on board, you will never get the congregation on board. We need their support and creativity.

At the next staff meeting, ask the following questions... (please refer above for how to establish your summer giving need.)

1. Do you guys know how much we need each Sunday from Memorial Day to Labor Day?
2. Do you know what missions or ministries we would need to cut if we don't hit those numbers?
3. Will *not* being able to do those missions and ministry initiatives matter?

If, after this, they don't see the need for a summer giving plan, then you might need to start looking for a new team! After asking those questions and listening for a bit, I would challenge them to help you craft the absolute best summer giving plan of all time! J

Hey, I've got you covered this summer! In this playbook, I will give you everything you will need to plan out an effective summer giving strategy. All you have to do is follow my lead, personalize the plan to fit your culture and context, and then execute the plan. If you will do this, you can turn your summer slump into a summer victory.

How to Motivate People to *Want* to Give This Summer

The foundation is laid by casting a vision that excites people. Dollars always follow vision. The bigger the vision, and the better you communicate that vision, goes a long way toward gaining someone's gift. Cast your vision by using what I call the 3 Cs of Vision Casting:

1. **Make it Clear** - Above all else, do people clearly understand what you are doing this summer and why? Is your vision clear? Can people easily tell their work associates, neighbors, and friends what you are doing and why? When visions are not clear, people will not donate.
2. **Keep it Concise** - Donors have two questions: does this make sense and can you pull it off? Answer those questions, and you will get their dollars. Remember the old KISS acronym? It stands for Keep It Simple Somehow. KISS is good advice for communicating your vision for the summer.
3. **Cast it Compellingly** - The most important thing is to make your vision matter in the hearts of your members. A compelling vision that motivates the heart will, even in the worst of economic times, cause dollars to come to your ministry. Show your donors how their gift will make a difference, and they will rise up to support it financially.

Let me give you **3 Keys to Casting an Appealing and Motivating Vision**. Every appeal you make *must* be appealing, from letters to emails to offering talks to vision statements for giving initiatives. If it isn't appealing, it won't be successful. You'll come off looking like you're begging. So, let's break down how to make any appeal appealing. The first key is...

Don't make it about you! In this instance, the "you" is defined as making a giving appeal for the sake of simply making some budgetary number. That's not appealing. Your appeal asking donors to give can't be why *you* need money. They don't respond to appeals to pay the electric bill. They respond to helping fulfill your God-given story.

Second, show what you/they do. You are attempting to connect how a dollar given at your church fuels your missions and ministry endeavors. You show them what "you," the church, are doing. You help them see that "they" had a part in that story. It's all about the story. I think I feel a Brooks Generosity Mantra coming on that sums it up best...

Get a story, work your story, tell your story, and people will give to support that story.

Stories are powerful communication tools. What do people remember most about the teachings of Jesus? The Parables. Parables are simply stories with a heavenly meaning. Why do people buy books, go to movies, and binge on Netflix? Because everyone loves a good story.

Your story is your mission and vision in action. And it's a great story. You are changing the world one person at a time. You are helping raise up the next generation of believers.

You must know how to craft your appeal in a compelling way. I always say...

- Every appeal or "ask" needs a driver. A driver is a vision that drives me to my wallet to give.
- Make the "ask" about fulfilling a vision, not hitting a number. What is the vision behind your appeal?

- The basic elements of an “ask” are...

Crisis – I want my donors to know about...

Need – We can help by...

Ask – Your gift NOW will help us meet this need!

How does that formula work out? Let’s use an offering talk as an example. Since I have talked about summer giving and the 15 offerings, let’s craft an offering talk around a church’s student ministry.

Crisis – A recent study confirmed that a majority of American young adults who attended church regularly drop out after they enter college. 66% drop out in their first year away from home. There is a 69% chance they will never return!

Need – We must train up and disciple our students to be prepared for the challenges of college.

Ask – Your faithful generosity helps us fund all the discipleship ministries of our church, like summer camps, etc.

You can flesh it out further with details specific to your setting. The final key to appealing appeals is that you must...

Make ‘em want to give! It has always been my contention that it is not that the Church talks too much about money. The problem is that when we do talk about money, we talk about it in a way that turns people off. We typically load them down with guilt. We need to create a desire to want to give within the donor.

I have found that most of those in our services each week *know* they ought to give. Our goal, especially with new donors, is to make them see the crisis, and the need you are offering to solve that crisis, so they will **want** to give.

Take the time to craft out each of your appeals, starting with the 15 Summer Sunday offerings! It could reverse the summer slump in giving.

Vision Worksheet

The following points will serve as a guide for developing the case statement:

Step One: List 3 things your Church accomplished last summer. You want to point to "wins" that show the impact of giving to your Church. You want to show them that giving made a difference.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Step Two: List 3 things you want to do this summer. Focusing on any missions and ministries coming up allows donors to make a difference with their gifts. You want to show them that their gift *now* can make a difference.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Why is it important to give to this now?

How can their gift *now* make a difference?

Putting the Tools Together for Your Best Summer Giving Ever

Your vision is the driver, but the best driver in the world is worthless without **effective vehicles to drive the vision to those you want to impact**. This section of the playbook will share the essential tools to effectively launch your summer giving strategy.

Back before COVID-19, we had a captured audience every weekend. With both onsite and virtual engagement, the best strategy is a 24/7 approach to the offering. In the 21st century, we must use multiple tools to achieve success.

What systems should you have in place?

1. **Dynamic website.** Your website is the first place most people will visit BEFORE they ever darken your doors. Make yours a good one!
2. **Robust online giving platform, including text giving.** You should be working towards most of your giving coming in via digital means. We can help at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/>.
3. **Social Media platform and presence.** Like it or not, social media is where many people spend a great bulk of their time. If you are not there, you miss an opportunity to connect with people.
4. **Postage-paid envelopes.** I know this sounds old school, but this can be a great tool if used properly.
5. **Extensive database of your donors.** A given is to have all your member's email addresses. Yet you need also to have the ability to break this list down by various subgroups like first-time givers, consistency, etc.
6. **A mass email platform, such as Constant Contact or MailChimp.** There are many platforms to help you send out emails in multiple batches. Some offer free services for a limited number of sends. Most cost only a few dollars a month. Find the tool that suits your church database best.
7. **Offering talks.** On-campus or live streaming, it is essential that each offering time has a talk connecting your vision to giving. Take your offering talks to the next level! One thing that you must do is keep changing what you do during the offering.

Ideas to take your summer offerings to the next level – Since even my stellar offering talks can become routine, causing members to tune you out, let me give you some ideas on how to take your talks to the next level.

- **Use Video** – Many of my clients already use video loops for announcements. Why not use that approach for the offering? For instance, while you are talking about VBS on the screens, you could be showing shots from last year's VBS or shots of your kids in action. Non-profits use shots of kids to tug at donors' hearts. Why do they do that? It works!
- You could also video the whole offering talk. Today it is so easy to do. Just take your smartphone, point, and click, and you can make your own videos. While the content quality will not rival the networks, what makes it appealing is that it is local. People love to see people they know on video. Show and tell what you are doing, and the offering plate will fill up!
- **Interviews** – Even churches without screens or projectors can take their offerings up a notch using the interview process. Let's take VBS again. A few weeks before you launch VBS, you have your director come to the platform and interview her. Tell her to look at you, not the crowd. Then ask questions about VBS. When is it? How many kids are you expecting? How many of them will come from outside the church? How many decisions do you typically see in VBS? Thank her and then say, "We can hold our VBS only because of your generosity. So, as we focus on today's offering, I want you to know that your generosity funds VBS, so please give as God directs." These are two easy ideas of how to better tell your story.
- **Use your offerings for previews, reports, and thanks** - My advice is to think through the entire summer. Each week pick one specific mission or ministry endeavor to focus upon. Challenge your team to think of creative and effective ways to tell the story and then ask people to support that

work. You can also build an offering talk reporting on the success of missions and ministry initiatives. In the Church, we do a poor job of blowing our horns and praising God for what was accomplished. Let members know *how* their gifts helped change lives. Then thank them for the fact that their generosity allowed that to happen.

Start thinking and planning NOW what each of your offering talks will be about, and you will have greater success in being fully funded this summer! See last week's Bonus Section.

These are the essential tools for implementing the plan I suggest. Having these tools in place will help you with your plan to fully fund your summer, but it will also help throughout the year. With the right message and the right tools, you can have your best summer giving ever.

The 15 Offerings of Summer Playbook Plan

Use the chart to plan out your 15 offerings. The Who, How, What, When, Why column helps you decide the best way to communicate the story you are focusing on. Each offering is about connecting your summer vision to life change!

Date	Focus of Offering	Who, How, What, When, Why?
May 28 th		
June 4 th		
June 11 th		
June 19 th		
June 25 th		
July 2 nd		
July 9 th		
July 16 th		
July 23 rd		
July 30 th		
August 6 th		
August 13 th		
August 20 th		
August 27 th		
September 3 rd		

Offering Talks

Here are 15 talks I have written to give you ideas. Or just print it off and read it! You can increase your giving in 2 minutes or less by setting up every offering with an offering talk. Here are 15 talks designed to help increase your special offering giving.

May 28th

A Memorial Gift

This weekend is Memorial Day. The sad thing about many of our holidays is that we have forgotten why they exist. Memorial Day, celebrated on the last Monday of May, was first started to commemorate fallen Union soldiers who died in the Civil War. By the 20th century, it had been extended to honor all Americans who have died in all wars. It developed from there into a day for general expressions of memory for deceased relatives, whether they had served in the military or not. So the day is supposed to be remembering and honoring those who have gone before us.

A few years ago, the Christian singer Steve Green sang a popular song entitled "Find Us Faithful." That song says, "We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road. And those who've gone before us line the way, cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary, their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace. Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run the race not only for the prize but also as those who've gone before us. Let us leave to those behind us. The heritage of faithfulness passed on through godly lives."

The song is based upon Hebrews 12:1, which says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Think about where we would be without those that have paid the price for our freedom. We owe so much to so many. We should take time out to remember their sacrifice. We should memorialize those who served our nation and family members who served us.

Many times we give a memorial gift in honor of someone. You may have noticed plaques in churches where pews or windows were given in the memory of someone. The focus of our giving should always be to be obedient to the Lord. Yet this morning, as we approach our time of offering, wouldn't it be special if our gifts were given a memorial statement of gratitude for those who have invested so much for us? As our ushers come forward for our offering, let's give gifts that would honor those that have gone before us.

Who Is Ready for Summer? - June 4th

How many of you have a trip planned for this summer? OK, shout out to me, where are you going? Give time for them to share. Can you fit me in your suitcase? Summer is our typical vacation time, and many of you have been planning your vacation for months. It might amaze you, but Americans spend over \$100 billion dollars a year on vacations. Here is some bad news. Due to the increase in gasoline prices, vacations this year are projected to increase over last year. So, on top of your planning, start saving!

Just as you plan in advance for a successful vacation and must figure out how to pay for it, we here at YOUR CHURCH NAME do the same for the upcoming summer months. Summers are our busiest time of the year. Consider that this summer, we will...

- List any mission trips you have planned,
- List any camps or retreats for youth or students,
- List Vacation Bible School or children's camps,
- AND we will still be open doing all our regular ministry week by week!

We have been planning and working for months to make sure these events go off smoothly. By faithfully giving to YOUR CHURCH NAME, you can help us prepare for summer by assuring that these vital missions and ministry initiatives happen. Just like your vacation, our mission trips and other ministry initiatives cost money. While our ministries kick into high gear, we typically experience lower offerings.

We can do what we do because of your generosity. Every dollar given here helps us advance the Gospel. So, thank you for your gifts today in this offering.

Please consider setting up your giving to be automatic so that your gift of love is still present in the plate when you are gone. Your giving makes possible the life change of many! Thanks for helping us get ready for a fabulous summer by giving generously today!

VBS Trivia – June 11th

Does anyone here like trivia? I have a church history question for you about Vacation Bible School. To help you, I'll make it multiple-choice. A woman named Mrs. Hawes, who lived in New York City, became concerned about the poor children running around in summer without anything to do. She started what was called Everyday Bible School. Most historians track this as the beginning of what became Vacation Bible School.

Here is the question, where was the first Everyday Bible School held?

- In a school.
- In a beer hall.
- In a church basement.
- Under a tree.

Mrs. Dawes started her Everyday Bible School in 1898, renting out a beer hall during the daytime. Vacation Bible School developed from a beer hall to sweep the nation.¹ Millions of children have been impacted for eternity through Vacation Bible School.

Thankfully due to your generosity, we have plenty of space and capacity for kids this summer for our Vacation Bible School. As we take time to focus on our offering today, I wanted to help you see that your gifts today help run programs like VBS, one of our key outreach events. This year, we believe God for XXX kids, and we need all the help we can get. In fact, if you would like to generously give your *time* see _____.

So, today as we focus upon our time of giving, let's give cheerfully, knowing our gifts will enable us to share the love of Jesus with the boys and girls of our community.

1. <https://vbs.lifeway.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/HistoryofVBS.pdf>

Father's Day Gifts - June 18th

Today is Father's Day! Thank God for fathers! Some of you have fathers still living, and for others of you, your father has gone. Yet living or passed, we celebrate their lives today.

What gifts do we get for our fathers? Traditionally, it has been ties. Given the pandemic, I am not sure if anyone wears ties anymore. This might account for the fact that it is projected that 2.2 billion dollars of the 12 billion dollars spent this Father's Day will be gift cards.¹ I'm not sure a gift card requires much thought, but apparently, that is the top way to show our love to our fathers.

How much love do you show for your heavenly Father when it comes to the offering? I am not trying to lay a guilt trip upon you as I ask that question. I simply want you to think about whether your gift is a thoughtful gift or something you throw in the plate or basket. We need to realize that the offering is when we show our heavenly Father the same honor we give our earthly fathers today.

In the Living Bible, Proverbs 3:9 says, "**Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income, and he will fill your barns....**" What we give shows whether or not we truly honor God. Just as we pause today to give honor and tribute to our earthly fathers with a gift, let's pause and give our heavenly Father a gift with the first part of our incomes.

We give you multiple ways to give, so find your best option. We greatly appreciate your generosity which makes all that we do possible. Thank you!

1. <https://muchneeded.com/fathers-day-statistics/>

Yes, We Do Talk About Money Here! – June 25th

“All the church ever talks about is money!” Have you ever heard that? If you regularly attend church, you know that is not true. Yet every week, we put a focus on giving to the offering. So, at least for a few minutes, we talk about money here.

Have you ever wondered what we do with that money? This morning, before we take up the offering, I wanted to share our plans this summer to help you understand what we do with the money we give you. List your missions and ministry activities for the summer.

Here are my suggestions.

- VBS – Every year, we hold Vacation Bible School here. We typically have around 100 kids for a week. Many of these kids don't come regularly here. Many come from broken homes where they get little to no love. We love on them and tell them that God loves them and has a plan for their lives. It costs us money to hold this event. So, yes, we ask you to give to support that!
- Student Camp – Every year, we take our students to camp. At camp, we teach them there is a better way to live their lives than to follow the path of the world. We teach them how to follow Christ in a Christ-less society. Student camp is one tool we use to mold the next generation for Christ. It costs us money to hold this event. So, yes, we ask you to give to support that!
- Mission Trip to _____ - This year, we will be sending teams to _____. We will be doing a multitude of things. Share specifics of what your teams will do. It costs money to go there and do what we believe God wants us to do. So, yes, we ask you to give to support that! We talk about money because we believe in what we are doing and that what we are doing matters! What matters is worth giving to. So, while we don't pressure anyone to give, we invite you to participate in what we are doing with your generous gift this morning!

Freedom Isn't Free - July 2nd

I don't know about you, but I get emotional every time I hear the National Anthem and see our flag. I realize how blessed we are to live in this great nation where we have such freedom. We are gathered here with no fear of reprisal as we are free to worship as we see fit.

We will celebrate our nation's birthday with Independence Day in just a few days. The Fourth of July has come to mean many things to us Americans. It means baseball, hotdogs, and Chevrolet to some. It is a day off to lay around the pool or beach with others. The Fourth is a time for us to relax and spend time with our families, eat and watch parades and fireworks. Sometimes we forget the real meaning of the holiday, to celebrate the fact that our Founding Fathers risked their lives so that we could be free.

There have been many countless sacrifices to maintain our freedom through the years. From Valley Forge to Gettysburg, to San Juan Hill, to WWI, to the beaches of Normandy and Okinawa, to Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, brave men and women serve so that we can eat hotdogs and ice cream in peace and freedom. As we look at the rows of white tombstones in our cemeteries, we are reminded that freedom isn't free. It was bought with the blood of patriots and kept by the sacrifice of countless men and women who serve around the globe.

We have an even greater freedom today than the freedom our nation grants us. We are free in Christ. His sacrifice purchased a pardon from sin and set us free to live a new and meaningful life as our flag symbolizes our freedom as a nation, so the cross symbolizes that we are free in Christ. The great hymn-writer Isaac Watts wrote in *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*, "When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride. Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small: Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all."

We can never give a gift to repay God for the sacrifice of His Son. The point of the hymn is not that we should try to repay God with our gifts. The point is that a sacrifice like that so freely given causes us to WANT to give back to Him freely, willingly, and out of love.

Let's keep this in mind as we approach our giving this week.

Meet Our All-Stars - July 9th

I'm not sure anyone cares, but this week is the National Baseball League's All-Star game. Will anyone watch? The All-Star game is always intriguing, seeing the best of the best.

Did you know we have All-Stars here at CHURCH NAME? Our volunteers are All-Stars. They come week after week, volunteering their time parking cars, working in the nursery, as host and hostess, and doing other tasks. Each one serving is an All-Star! Let me introduce you to a *few* of our All-Stars, **(IF POSSIBLE, SHOW PICTURES OF EACH IN THEIR SETTING)**

List several of your servant leaders:

- We have Mary Smith, who heads up our Pre-School on first base.
- We have Joe Jones, who heads up our parking lot team on second base.
- We have Jill Tucker, who heads up our Greeters on third base.
- Etc.

Let's give each of them a huge round of applause. Thanks to all our volunteers!

Do you know who else we consider All-Stars here? You! Your generosity funds our All-Stars staff's various ministries every time you give here. Without your support, they would not be able to do the amazing work. So, thank you for your generosity.

We have many ways to give here. Find the way that is most convenient for you. The MOST convenient way is by setting up recurring giving through our website. That way, you never have to worry about forgetting the offering again.

We Want to Say Thank You – July 16th

Are you having a good summer? Has anyone already been on vacation? How many of you wish you were on vacation? Do you remember when you were a kid and had the whole summer off from school? Now that is a vacation! Alas, we now must work so that our kids can sleep in!

Summer is a busy time for us here at OUR CHURCH. We have tons going on. Let me list a few things...**Share stats of various ministries and missions you have going on.**

AND we are not done yet! We have a ton more coming up. Each of these is about helping connect people to a life-changing experience with Christ. We could not do any of this without you! Thousands of hours each week are donated in service by people like you. From greeting people at the door to wiping babies' bottoms, YOU make this church what it is! Thank you for your service! Let's give all our volunteers a hand!

We depend on volunteers giving their time, but those missions and ministry initiatives take money. Your generosity makes this happen. You generously give your money fueling what we do. So, before we take up the offering, I want to thank you! Thank you for investing in the lives of children. Thank you for investing in the lives of students. Thank you for investing in missions here in our town and worldwide. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! **Your generosity is changing lives forever!**

How Your Gift Today Shapes Eternity – July 23rd

This morning, each of us has an opportunity to shape eternity and the destiny of scores of children and students! Here at YOUR CHURCH NAME, we exist to STATE YOUR MISSION STATEMENT OR MATTHEW 28:18-20.

This summer, we will be active in multiple missions and ministry opportunities. Here are just a few examples of what we will be doing:

- List any mission trips you have scheduled
- List any other ministry initiative
- Talk about what you will be doing for children
- Talk about what you will be doing for students

Why is this important? Studies show that the Church has a narrow window of opportunity to reach children and teens. 83% of all Christians made their commitment to Christ between the ages of 4 and 14. Studies have found that from age 19 and over, a person has only a 6% chance of becoming a Christian.

So, what is our opportunity today? This summer, the offering we are about to take up fuels our mission and ministry initiatives. Without the faithful generosity of people like you, we could not do any of the things I mentioned this summer. You enable us to better reach the next generation for Christ through your generosity. So, please prayerfully consider a generous gift this morning to help us make an eternal impact on the lives of our children, teens, and others. Your gift today WILL shape eternity!

Summer Is Almost Over, but We Are Not Done – July 30th

Can you believe that summer is almost over? I know that technically summer does not end until mid-September. Yet, in just a few weeks, schools will be back in session, and for all practical purposes, summer will be over.

Have you had a good time this summer? Did anybody go to the beach? How about the lake? Did anyone just take some time off and do nothing? You know sometimes nothing is good. You just need some downtime—time off from the hustle and bustle of life and its demands.

Sometimes when we go on vacation, we need a vacation from our vacation! That is why a lot of people are now taking staycations. People who do this might do some activities nearby, but they stay at home and sleep in their beds. Did any of you take a staycation?

Whether you stayed at home or went away, our vacation time is almost done. **At Your Church Name, we are far from done!** We have the following key events coming up...

List whatever activities you have coming up.

Every time you give here, you help fund these vital ministries! We depend upon your faithful giving to do everything we do, including keeping the building cool! As you might imagine, our giving is greatly challenged with many people going during the summer months. Would you consider making that up this morning if you missed an offering this summer? Your gift today will help us reach more people with the Good News!

First Things First - August 6th

Who doesn't like to be first? We always want to be first, from winning a race, match, or game to standing in line. First place is the place everyone wants to be in. Yet sometimes, we willingly forego being first.

We do this because first place is not just the place for winners, but it is the place of honor. When you have company at your house, don't you offer them the first of everything? When it comes to getting in the food line, who doesn't want to be first? Yet we offer our guests the first serving. We even open doors for people so they can go in first. First is a place not just for winning, but it's a place of prominence and honor. Putting someone or something first in your life shows what you value.

Proverbs 3:9,10 says, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the **firstfruits** of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine."

It is not as if God needs our money. After all, the Scriptures say he owns the cattle on a thousand hills. God wants what our money represents, our heart. Giving to God of the first of all we have shows our love for Him. When you give, you show God has first place in your heart.

So, today as we focus on the offering, let's show that God is first in our lives by giving an offering that obeys and honors Him! Find the easiest way to express your love to God by giving your first fruits!

Is It Worth the Cost? - August 21st

Have you ever heard someone say, "We are delaying having kids until we can afford it?" How much is that? According to a recent study, it costs between **\$12,800 to \$14,790 every year**.¹ The same study showed that the more kids you have, the more the cost. Multiply that over 18 years, and what will the cost be? We are not even talking about college costs yet!

Here is the question. Is it worth the cost? Ask a new mother that question. Ask a dad after his first daughter/dad date or after the first soccer game. Ask a parent after their child graduates if all the costs of books, cleats, musical instruments, clothes, medicine, etc., were worth it. The answer is yes! You can't put a price tag on raising kids. Our children are our future, and there is no cost too high.

We have pulled out all the stops this summer to create the best children's and student programs possible. Here is what we have seen,

- List Children's ministry results from the summer.
- List Student ministry results from the summer.

You can't put a price tag on that! We could never accomplish this without your generosity. Every time you give here, you help us achieve results like this in the lives of children and students. As a result of your generosity, *you* are investing in the next generation of Christian leaders. Thanks for being so faithful!

We have many ways by which you can give. Find the way that is best for you. Thanks for showing that the next generation is worth the cost!

1. <https://costaide.com/raising-child-cost/>

Let's Finish Strong - August 20th

Are you ready for some football? Say goodbye to your husband's wives; football season has arrived!

Have you ever watched a football game and seen players raise four fingers in the air at the start of the 4th quarter? The players are reminding themselves that they have one last quarter to bring home a victory. It is a reminder for the team to not let up but to give it their all until the final gun sounds. It's a reminder to finish strong.

Many a game is won or lost in the fourth quarter. Sometimes games are won in the last two minutes or seconds. That is why college and professional teams practice over and over what is called their two-minute drill. It is designed to give them the winning score in the game's last two minutes. Why? Because the difference between winning and losing is in how strong you finish.

We are nearly through our summer giving initiative. Our goal was _____. As a result of your generosity, we accomplished all we did this summer. We saw amazing life change, but there is still more to do!

Just as a football team raises four fingers in the air to denote the start of the fourth quarter, we need to stay faithful in our giving to finish our summer giving strong. We still must fund our ministries and work. We are not playing for some trophy that will ultimately tarnish or be trashed. We are about the Kingdom work of our heavenly Father. Our work has eternal consequences, and we cannot slack off or rest from our calling. Let's finish strong by giving generously today.

Remember, we give you multiple ways to give here. Find the best way for you, and thank you for your generosity!

How a Small Amount Becomes a Large Amount – August 27th

Trivia question! What is the only miracle mentioned in all four Gospels? Yes! The Feeding of the 5,000. Let me read you this story from John's Gospel. Read John 6:1- 7. I don't know about you, but I identify with Phillip! I am afraid, like Phillip, I would have seen feeding more than 5,000 people as impossible. Here is a lesson for all of us. With Jesus, the impossible is possible.

Read verses 8 – 13. A boy in the crowd offered his lunch as the first course. Note how Andrew uses the word "small" twice to describe the fish and bread in the lunch pail. He sums up what I think is in many people's minds when he says, "how far will they go among so many?" The answer is found in the next few verses. Read John 6:10-13.

Scholars believe that since Jews only counted men, there could potentially have been 20,000 hungry mouths to feed! Not only did the five small loaves and two small fish feed that number, but they also collected leftovers!

The only miracle appearing in all four Gospels came from a boy's small gift. The lesson for us is that the size of our gift doesn't determine the impact of that gift. As we approach our time of worship through giving, remember this story. You might think your gift is insignificant. Yet, combined with all our gifts, your generosity does indeed matter.

Today we encourage you to give through the many ways we have set up. Your gift that you might think is a small amount, combined with everyone's generosity, becomes a large amount helping us reach our city for Christ. What all of us can do together is greater than what only a few of us can do.

What You Do Matters -September 3rd

Labor Day is upon us! If you are like me, you are wondering where summer went? Labor Day is the traditional end of summer weekend. It is officially the day we celebrate the contributions workers have made to our country's strength, prosperity, and well-being. Our nation's way of saying, "Thank you for your hard work!"

Labor Day has been a federal holiday since 1894. According to the United States Department of Labor website, "Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a creation of the labor movement and is dedicated to American workers' social and economic achievements. It constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to our country's strength, prosperity, and well-being."

I want to take an opportunity to say thank you to all who serve and labor here. Without you, we could not do all the amazing things we do, so thank you! What you do here matters! It matters to the lives of the children you minister to. It matters to the lives of students you are helping navigate through the difficulties of their teen years. It matters to our guests who just want to know where to park and where to go. All our workers are laboring for the Lord matter!

Paul implored the church at Corinth by saying, **"Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain,"** I Corinthians 15:58. That is a great reminder to all of us. You might not be on the platform visible each Sunday, but your presence, service, and generous contributions help fuel all we do here. Our "labor" together is not in vain. We are changing lives one person at a time, and you are part of that!

As a result of all your labors, we have seen great successes this summer. We rejoice in what we saw accomplished for the Kingdom. The faithful service and generosity of our members allowed this to happen. Yet there is more to do. This fall is filled with activities and events. Carrying out our vision is always our focus. Your generous gifts will allow us to achieve our goals for the fall. All our large and small gifts help fuel our work here.

So today, I want you to know your service matters, as does your gift in this offering. So give like your gift matters!

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN GETTING AN OFFERING TALK DELIVERED TO YOU EVERY WEEK? In my newsletter called "The Stewardship Coach," I write a fresh talk weekly. Find out more at,

<https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/print-platform/>.



Looking for a newsletter that gives you incredible help in increasing generosity? I write the best weekly newsletter in America called **The Stewardship Coach Newsletter!** My members get this informative and packed generosity tool every Monday morning. Find out how you can get started receiving, **The Stewardship Coach Newsletter!**

Silver Level: Membership at this level gives you America's leading weekly newsletter on all things generosity-related, **The Stewardship Coach.** This is a great tool for church leaders that want to stay abreast of the latest generosity news, information, and best-case strategies.

Each newsletter contains:

- Weekly thoughts from me, **The Stewardship Coach,** on the state of generosity and its impact upon your Church with practical advice you can immediately implement!
- **Weekly offering talks!** Some sites charge as much as \$99 a month for this!
- Social Media advice, strategies, and suggestions to connect with donors and increase giving!
- Interviews with leading experts in generosity and much, much more!

The cost is \$9.99 a month or \$99 for a year's subscription.

<https://acts17generosity.com/memberships>