

ELEVATOR PITCH YOUR OFFERINGS

A Plan For Short Stewardship Messages



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7 Reasons Why NOT Passing the Plate DOESN'T Make Sense

The current trend among churches is to NOT take up an offering. Here is something startling, those churches experience a **15% loss in giving!**

In a recent study it was found that churches that don't actually pass a plate, bucket, basket or some other means of collecting money, take in 15% less annually than churches of the same size. So if you think the offering time is a waste of time or is offensive just whack off 15% because that is what you will lose.

If this is true why then do some churches shy away from taking up the offering or do away with it altogether? **They are more interested in attracting a crowd than making disciples.**

Do you think that is too harsh? OK, here is the reasoning behind NOT taking up an offering during the service. The typical response I get from church leaders is that people are turned off by churches talking about money. You will hear pastor say, "We canvassed our community before we started our church and found that one of the biggest reasons people avoid church is they think all we talk about is money." I bet you have heard that right? This is the major reason given as to why a church does not pass the plate. So, in effect they are allowing non-churched people to dictate the practices of the church.

Let me give you 7 Reasons Why Not Passing the Plate Doesn't Make Sense – Here is why I think not taking up an offering is wrong...

1. **Jesus never worried about gaining a crowd and he talked more about money and finances than any other subject.** Read Jesus encounter with the Rich Young Ruler. When the young man walked away sad at Jesus bold claim about his money Jesus let him go. Think about that. Shouldn't we attempt to be more like Jesus?
2. **Offerings are mentioned repeatedly throughout both the Old and New Testaments.** Using BibleGateway I discovered that "offering" comes up 728 times in the Bible and "offerings" comes up 268 times. If we are not talking about offerings or taking up offerings we are essentially cutting out about 1,000 verses in the Bible.
3. **The offering IS worship so why would we forbid or make it hard for people to worship God through their tithes and offerings?** Do you tell people before your service that they don't HAVE to sing or do you just start singing and invite them to join you? How is that any different from asking people to join you in the worshipful act of giving?
4. **Studies show that churches rarely talk about money if at all.** I once had a church member tell me that his pastor talked too much about money. I knew that in that last year the pastor had preached only once on money. When I pointed that out to the church member he simply shrugged. I learned then that one sermon a year was one too many for those who truly are not disciples.
5. **Nobody complains when non-profits talk about money and giving.** One reason why I believe is because non-profits always make a case for the appeal for your money. They know that it is not THAT you ask for money but HOW you ask for the gift that matters.
People react to churches appeals not because we ask for money but how we ask. Typically instead of making a case for the offering we lay down the guilt gauntlet. **Instead of changing our methods we need to change our message!**
6. **Your church is changing the world for good and as such it is worth funding.** Thank God for the Red Cross. However, your mission is more important than theirs. We are literally about saving the world. Why would we NOT ask people to participate in that by giving?
7. **You can't afford to lose 15%!** Back to my starting point. Churches that don't pass the plate are costing themselves 15% less in operating money.

Keep passing the plate or whatever you use! In the next section I am going to talk to you about **The Single Most Important Thing You Can Do to Increase Giving.**

The Single Most Important Thing You Can Do to Increase Giving

The single most important thing you can do to increase giving at your church is to know how to elevator pitch your offerings.

You doubt that? Here is what one pastor wrote me a few years ago...

"Giving at our church can be summed up with one word: **phenomenal!** Giving is up **30%+** this year. We connect the dots every week, often using your 'Elevator pitch' from the weekly Stewardship Coach newsletter. This has been life changing for our church as we no longer scrape around for money every week." Brian Hughes Sr. Pastor PCC Powhatan, VA

You might not increase your giving by 30% but you too can increase your giving IF you change how you handle the offering.

OK, now that I have your attention let's start by discussion what an elevator pitch is.

The elevator pitch arrives from the idea that you are riding in an elevator when a big shot company executive enters in. You have maybe thirty seconds of time with him or her. What you say in those thirty seconds of riding the elevator will mean the difference of whether you get a full hearing later or are simply forgotten. The idea is to comprise the key information about you into a thirty second burst of energy that will "sell" your idea or you.

So, pretending I am on the elevator with you I might say, "Ah, Pastor Smith, you might have heard that giving to churches is off. In fact your church might be experiencing a decline in giving. When giving declines, ministry initiatives are threatened. Lives are impacted. Yet the churches we are partnering with have seen their giving go UP. We work with good churches and make them better. I would love to talk to you about how we can increase your giving." That is better than simply, "Hi, my name is Mark and I would really like to talk to you about my company."

Every Sunday you have an elevator moment - we call it the offering. Most pastors say something at that point in the service. Some explain away how people are not required to give; we don't want to offend the guests. Some almost beg for money to be given. Some use guilt or some other tactic. All pastors have some approach to the offering even if they have no stated approach - I call it the Lack of an Approach.

So, if you could boil down in an elevator pitch why people should put their hard earned money in the offering plate what would you say? I once read a book called, The Influential Fundraiser that stated, "**Every elevator pitch should have three elements: think, feel and do.**"

The book states that in crafting your elevator pitch you need to prepare it in reverse order; by starting with what action you want your speech to ensure. In the case of the offering you want their gift. Next, you imagine the emotion or feeling in those people that will likely move them to give their offering. Finally, you select and then shape the information or data you feel will likely create that emotion and thus their response.

When your elevator moment arrives what will you say? Guess what? Every Sunday you have an elevator moment, the offering. What you say could make the difference between making budget this year

or laying off staff members and canceling ministry. You better get your elevator pitch on! That is the focus of this manual.

“Just as we get going in worship, we have to stop and take up the offering!” That was the comment a staff member made a few years back when asked about the offering time at their church. It might not surprise you that with that attitude, giving had declined the year before at this church. That attitude permeates the Church today. To increase giving and givers, we must recognize that the offering IS worship!

If you are a pastor, how much time did you spend this week preparing for your message? When I was in seminary, we had a preaching professor that said for every minute you preached, you should spend one hour of preparation. While I know few pastors that put in that amount of time, we all prepare and pray over our message. Why? Because it is so important.

So, let me ask you. **How much time and preparation have you put into this weekend’s offering?**

OK, you might be saying but what should I be spending my time on preparing for the offering? Here are some thoughts. First, you MUST...

1. Elevate the importance of the offering first with yourself and then the entire staff. Work to change the attitude that the offering is an inconvenience, and see it as an act of worship. One practical way you can make offering planning important is to include it in your staff planning meetings.

2. Don’t be afraid to ask people to give. Never apologize for the offering. Never say for instance, “If you are a guest today please don’t feel like you have to give.” Why if the offering is a time of worship would we disinvite people to participate in that worship? So, never apologize for letting people give as an act of worship. Then...

3. Plan out every offering just like you plan out every message. Spend time every week thinking through how to best present the offering. Here is an idea...

4. Change the format and positioning regularly. Every once in a while, do something different to break the routine. Above all else...

5. Always give a stewardship message aka, Elevator Pitch, before the offering is taken up. That is of course the title of the paper! In the next few pages I will show you how best to work your offering talks or as I like to call them, Elevator Pitches. You probably want to stick with that offering talk term though. Just to be safe. Next...

6. Utilize testimonies before the offering as a means of inspiration. Laypeople expect you to tell them to give. When one of their peers talks about giving, they listen. To keep from getting stale...

7. **Use creative tools like video and skits to make the offering fun.** There is a host of material out there. Use it. Be creative! I will write more on this later. However, whatever you do...
8. **Always be positive with every offering appeal.** Guilt never works, so don't try to guilt people into giving. And remember, you MUST
9. **Cast a compelling reason as to why people should give.** People give to that which makes a difference. Tell them how their gift matters, and they will give. Finally,
10. **Regularly tell people what their gifts have accomplished and thank them for their gifts.** Blow your own horn in Jesus name. Link the offering to the ministries the church is doing. People give to success! People also like to be thanked. Never take your donors for granted.

I believe if you will incorporate these ten steps, your offerings will dramatically pick up. Work and plan to make your offerings anything but boring! That takes creativity which is what I will be writing about next in...

When It Comes to the Offering, Be Creative

If you want to improve the amount you take up each week when it comes to the offering, be creative. For the past few years I have been the leader in writing offering talks and posts about how to improve the offering moment. It is my contention that it is one if not THE most boring moment in our services. As a result I started writing weekly offering talks.

Every week I write an offering talk. I call them elevator pitches. An elevator pitch is a short statement you can make in less than one minute. Every weekend before the offering is taken up I encourage churches to use the time the usher walk forward to set up the offering. In essence you are making the case for WHY people SHOULD give.

My goal with my offering talks is to help people see how a dollar given to your church makes an impact for good. I call that connecting the dots. Now scores of churches are using offering talks to set the stage for their offering time. Yet here is a truth...

Even a good idea, repeated over and over again and again, gets stale over time and thus loses its impact!

So, what is the answer?

Be Creative!

Here are some creative ideas that will gain the attention of attendees and improve your ability to fill the plate this weekend!

- **Move it!** – Don't always do what you have always done. By simply moving the placement of the offering you will give it new attention. So, if you ALWAYS take up the offering before the sermon or after the service move it to another place in the service.

- **Use Testimonies** – Utilize testimonies before the offering as a means of inspiration. Lay people expect you to tell them to give. When one of their peers talks about giving they listen.
- **Use tools like video and skits to make the offering fun.** There is a host of material out there, use it!
- **Interview key ministry leaders** – I like to interview various leaders about the work their team is doing around the church. Then you can say, **“As we prepare to take up our offering I wanted you to hear how your generosity is making a difference!”**

By being creative you will better gain the attention of your attendees and thus have a better chance of gaining their dollar!

Here are some final thoughts about the offering time...

- **Never waste another offering!** Your offering time is key towards helping your church be fully funded.
- **Put offering planning on your staff or finance teams agenda.** We plan for that which we deem important. Trust me, come July, you will be glad you planned out each offering.
- **Never let just anyone take up the offering.** The offering should not be an afterthought in planning nor in the selection of who takes up the offering.
- **Always have a reason for the “ask.”** Don’t assume people know where their gift goes. Teach, inform and most of all inspire them to WANT to give.
- **Ask and ask boldly!** You are changing the world so why be timid or apologetic about asking people to fund your life changing work?

These steps will assure that your offerings will be anything but boring. Let me next give you an example.

A few years back I wrote a Mother’s Day offering talk for my members entitled, **“The Chicken Neck Sacrifice.”** How could I possibly tie chicken necks and offerings together? I frankly worried it might be too stupid. Imagine my amazement that it has become one of my most talked about offering talks! Here is the talk...

Have you ever heard that grandmothers and mothers would always eat the chicken neck when they served their families chicken? I remember hearing that and I found these statements from writers...

“When I was little, my mom and her mom used to always say that a mom’s favorite parts of the chicken were the necks and backs.” Another writer said,

“My Mom recently passed at 92. She ALWAYS ate the chicken neck. She said she liked it. Imagine my surprise when I brought one to her bedside three days before she passed and she turned her nose up at it. She confessed she never liked them and certainly didn’t have to eat them anymore!”

If they didn’t like them why did they eat them? **Because mothers always sacrifice for their children saving the best for them.** A mother’s love drives them to do amazing things even eating a bony chicken neck and feigning enjoyment from it! That is love and today we honor all mothers with this day of celebration. Let’s give all the mom’s a round of applause.

Love motivates us to do a lot of things we might not normally do like eat chicken necks. Every week we take up an offering and it is love that drives us to give away what we hold precious, our

money. We sacrifice for the good of others. Your gifts allow us to do all we do here in impacting the lives of others.

So, this morning as we honor and celebrate the sacrificial love of mothers let's give in that same spirit of mothers!

Now, let me be the first to say, this might have only struck a chord with a few but here is what one member wrote me, "your "elevator pitch for yesterday was primo, one of the best ever, so THANK YOU!" It just goes to show that sometimes that message you think stunk to high heaven hits someone right where they needed it.

Hopefully this is helpful information that will change how you approach the offering. AND, I have some of my past offering talks on the next few pages for you to consider. Remember, I write a weekly offering talk every week. To find out how to get on that list email me at mark@acts17generosity.com

Now to the sample offering talks!

No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets

Does anyone here remember Borden's ice cream? How about their mascot, Elsie the cow?

Borden's milk, ice cream and other products were a household word in the last century. From milk to ice cream to Elmer's Glue they were a mainstay of American business founded in 1857. Yet what you might not know is the story of William Borden the heir of that multi-million dollar company.

William Borden in 1904 upon graduating from high school was sent on an around the world trip as a graduation gift from his parents. He was so gripped by the needs he saw that he wrote home to say, "I'm going to give my life to prepare for the mission field." A friend expressed surprise that he was, "throwing himself away as a missionary." In response, Bill wrote two words on the back of his Bible: "**No reserves.**"

As a student at Yale Bill wrote an entry into his personal journey that defined what his classmates saw in him. He wrote, "Say no to self and yes to Jesus every time." Bill went on to start weekly Bible studies and prayer meetings. By the time he was a senior 1,300 Yale students were meeting in such groups around campus. Upon graduation Borden turned down some high paying job offers. He also gave no thought to the millions his family was worth. In his Bible he wrote two more words: "**No retreats.**"

When he finished his studies at Princeton, he sailed for China. Because he was hoping to work with Muslims, he stopped first in Egypt to study Arabic. While there, he contracted spinal meningitis. Within a month, 25-year-old William Borden was dead. Prior to his death, Borden had written two more words in his Bible: "**No regrets.**"

Was his life a waste? You would have a hard time convincing his classmates who were impacted by his life that he wasted his life. His story has been told countless times making an impact long after he departed this world. He lived as a Christian should live. All of us should live with, *No reserves, no retreats, no regrets!*

You might not be called to be a missionary but today through this offering you can help support the mission work we do here and around the world. May our gifts today represent, *No reserves, no retreats, no regrets!*

Fill the Tank!

Can you believe it is summer? Summer is our time for taking vacations. How many of you have a road trip planned? Americans love their cars and we love to drive. For those of you taking road trips you spend time planning out the trip so that you can get to your point of destination with the least amount of distraction possible.

If you have kids your planning is a bit more meticulous than those that don't have kids. You have to pack food, something to keep them occupied so that you don't have to repeatedly hear, are we there yet? Advanced planning helps make the trip more enjoyable and successful.

Would you leave the house on an empty tank? Of course not. Why stop before you even get started to fuel up the car? To maximize your trip you plan ahead and that includes filling up the tank before you leave the house. The last thing you want is for your trip to be ruined by running out of fuel.

You might not realize this but here at YOUR CHURCH NAME we need fuel too. We have some amazing "trips" planned this summer. From actual mission trips to summer camps to VBS our summer is filled. To accomplish all that we have need to be fully funded. It costs money to hold these events. We depend upon the generosity of people like you to keep our tank full of funds so we can do all the amazing things we have planned. In addition to that we like to keep paying the electric bill so you can sit in a cool auditorium!

Your generosity keeps our tank full! When you give here you are assuring that our life changing mission gets accomplished. Just as you would hate to run out of gas on your trip we too want to get to where we feel God wants us to go. So this morning as we take up the offering help us keep our tank full so we can continue to make a difference not only here in our community but literally around the world.

Making the Case for the Offering

The Church gets a bum rap a lot of times. It's true we sometimes deserve the bad press we get. However all the good we do far outweighs the few leaders who mess up and the few churches that do stupid things. Where would we be without churches in America? We certainly would have less colleges and hospitals. Oh, and guess who gave the most to support relief for the two most recent hurricanes, churches and Christians.

Study after study has shown that the most generous people in America are Christians. Critics often point out that Christians give most of their money to their local church. That is true but it ignores all the work that local churches do. With our offerings we pay our staff but think about all our staff does week in and week out not simply for members of our church but for our entire community. Think about all that the church does to support various causes and ministries around the world. Also, just so you know, Christians do give to places other than their church proving we are the most generous people in our country.

Yet for all that good we often hear people say things like, all the church talks about is money. You know that isn't true. Frankly most churches never talk about money which is the direct opposite of Jesus who talked more about money than any other topic.

We do here at YOUR CHURCH NAME take up a weekly offering. We never apologize for taking up the offering. For one thing Christians are commanded to give as an act of worship. So, a crucial element of worship then is taking up the offering. What we do try to accomplish with our offering is making a case for why you should give. We are often telling you stories of what your generosity allows us to do. Frankly one of the challenges is how to tell in about sixty seconds all that your dollars do through YOUR CHURCH NAME.

So, while we prepare for this week's offering let me say thank you for all your generosity. Your gifts matter both large and small. Every gift counts and every gift matters! By giving today you help us continue the amazing work YOUR CHURCH NAME does each and every day. The changed lives you see and the impact YOUR CHURCH NAME has had in your family is the case for why you should give.

You Can't Afford NOT to Give

The number one reason most people say they don't give to a church is that they cannot afford to give. What is interesting is those same people rush right out after church to be the first in line at the restaurant. Studies show that the average American spends over \$1,200 annually eating out. So how much do we give to the church? **The median gift to a church in America is \$200 a year!** So, we can't afford to give but we can afford to eat out?

Here is a principle to live by, you can't afford NOT to give! You will never meet a generous person who tells you giving was a mistake. You will never meet a generous person who will tell you that giving caused them to miss out on things. You will find that they agree with my stated principle that you cannot afford NOT to give. In fact generous people will tell you that they are able to be generous because, they are generous!

Does that seem contradictory to you? Consider what the Bible says about giving in II Corinthians 9:6 where it says, "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." Then further in that text it says, "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."

What God is promising us is that IF we are generous He will bless us so that we can bless others. Your gift here to our church helps us be a blessing to countless number of people. Giving doesn't cost you. Giving helps you. So this morning we encourage you to be generous and give because **you can't afford NOT to give!**