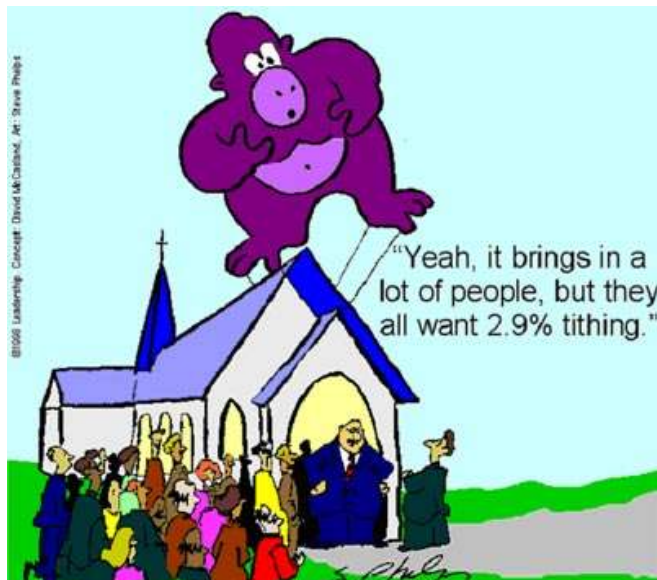




EQUIPPER

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Dear steward of God:

The apostle Peter exhorts us to be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10, KJV). This stewardship applies to all God’s gifts—money included.

As leaders, we may hesitate to speak with the members of our church about money. This hesitancy is understandable, given the way some ministers on TV and in print arm-twist incessantly for donations. However, we err when we remain silent on this important topic.

We are called to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds” (Heb. 10:24) and supporting the work of the church with our finances is a “good deed” that needs our attention.

This issue addresses several aspects of the important stewardship topic of member donations. Here are three:

- 1. Personal example.** We lead through our own pattern of donating. While we do not “trumpet” our personal giving, our example is known, and it either enhances or detracts from the credibility of what we teach about church donations.
- 2. Teach generous giving.** Pastors, when is the last time you gave a sermon on this topic? See page three for related tips.
- 3. Cast vision and provide reports.** These go hand-in-hand. First, communicate to your congregation a clear vision for ministry. Donors give to vision, not programs or appeals. Then regularly report to the congregation on vision progress and financial status. People want to know what is accomplished with the funding their donations provide. Please remember the GCI policy that requires church treasurers to submit to HQ and the members of their congregation a quarterly financial status report. The required annual budget report, when given in narrative format, is also a helpful tool for casting ministry vision.

Thanks for leading the way in your congregation in this important area of stewardship. Pastors, please review this material with your leadership team and finance committee.

Warm regards,
Dan Rogers

P.S. Hope you enjoy the cartoons: they provide a little sugar with the medicine!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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Equipping pastors, ministry leaders and ministry workers for participation in ministry with Jesus.

Tips for receiving offerings

Consider these tips about receiving offerings in church:

- 1. Make it worshipful.** Introduce the offering in church as “receiving” (not “taking up”) the offering. This helps members view it as the act of worship that it is. Integrate the offering into the service. The lead-in need not be lengthy, but do not low-key it so much that it is lost in the shuffle. It is helpful to bring the collected offering to the front and offer a prayer of dedication. And do not get in a rut with the format—change it from time to time, but think through the mechanics so it doesn’t detract from a worshipful tone in the service.
- 2. Make it accessible.** Send pre-labeled offering envelopes to your regular donors. Then provide offering envelopes at the worship service (hand them out well before the offering segment begins, and/or place envelopes in an easy to find location).
- 3. Make it clear.** Do not fail to ask people to give an offering (even if you excuse visitors). Remember, you are calling people to a *lifestyle* of worship—not a token contribution.
- 4. Tie it to mission/vision.** A short message introducing the offering segment in the worship service provides an opportunity to tie giving to the congregation’s mission and vision. Tell stories about what God is doing in and through the congregation. Speak to people’s hearts and their wallets will follow (Matthew 6:21). This is not manipulation or coercion—it’s worship leading!
- 5. Highlight integrity.** From time to time, remind the congregation about the careful procedures you use to receive, count, deposit, account for, report on, and expend offerings. This helps people have confidence in the integrity of the congregation’s financial process. People will not give to what they do not understand or trust.
- 6. Provide multiple giving methods.** From time to time (perhaps in a newsletter), inform members of the various ways donations may be given to the church. These include giving by cash or check in the offering. But there are other ways, including giving by credit card on a one time or recurring basis. Members can also arrange to give through a bequest at death. For instruction on these ways of giving, see <https://www.gci.org/participate/donate>.
- 7. Provide multiple giving targets.** In addition to seeking offerings to fund regular needs, congregations can call for offerings related to the funding of special or occasional needs: benevolence funds, building or mission projects, crisis ministries, camp scholarships, etc. Wise churches know how to invite people's "over and above" giving to tap into their God-given desire to meet specific needs. In asking for these designated donations, be sure to follow the GCI policy on “designated offerings” in the *Financial Management Manual*.

Offerings take longer since First Church lets people give items the church can sell on eBay.



Coffee donations are up since ex-con ushers have been assigned to stand by the collection basket.



All tithers stand, so I can pray God's blessing on your finances.



Which seating section would you prefer for our offering?



Tips for teaching about giving

Consider these tips about teaching financial stewardship to your church:

1. **Point to God.** The theology here is vital. Our triune God is generous and we are called to participate in his generosity: **Generous God, generous people.** A particular company may be our **employer**, but God alone is our **Provider**.
2. **Instruct from Scripture.** The Bible has a great deal to say about stewardship of our finances. In Scripture, there are 2,350 verses on finances, generosity, and material possessions. For help, see the references below.
3. **Teach financial management.** One reason some members are not generous and regular in donating to the church is a lack of basic money management skills. The church can help by providing classes (perhaps taught by a member who is a businessperson or accountant). Helpful resources for conducting such classes are available from www.crown.org and www.daveramsey.com. These classes are great for community outreach ("cultivating" events).
4. **Make it real.** When you teach or preach about financial stewardship, include real-life illustrations and applications. Haddon Robinson emphasizes this in an article formerly posted at ChristianityToday.com.

Recently someone said to me, "Haddon, when I contemplate standing up and talking about money, the thought of illustrations scares me to death. If I talk about the rich giver, I lose my people. If I talk about the super-poor in Bangladesh, I lose them. If I talk about me, I can lose them because they say, 'Well, you're a preacher. You should do that.' Where can I get credible, real-life illustrations about giving?"

That's a touchy problem. But the first area I mine for illustrations...is the Bible itself. Of the thirty-eight parables of Jesus, at least a dozen are devoted to money and to our use of material goods. The Gospels speak a tremendous amount on money; approximately one of every eight verses deals with the subject.... [Paul's] Philippian letter is a thank-you letter for financial support, and it teaches much. From these sources, we can draw not only insights, but effective illustrations.

Second, I share my own experiences with giving. I want people to know I'm not asking them to do anything I'm not willing to do. But I speak of my giving in a broad way... specific amounts only become stumbling blocks.

5. Check out these resources:

- *A Christian View of Money* by Mark Vincent
- *Money, Possessions and Eternity* by Randy Alcorn
- Articles on finances from GCI at www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/money/
- A teaching tool on biblical stewardship from Xenos at <http://www.xenos.org/teachings/topical/sermonmount/gary/sermon6-5.htm>

