

THE OFFERING MOMENT

90 SECONDS TO ENGAGE YOUR GIVERS



Generis

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INTRODUCTION

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, there are currently over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States. Each of these organizations, including your church, has at least one thing in common. They are all working hard to engage their giver base.

Nonprofit organizations survive or die based on the engagement of their giver base, or the lack thereof. Because of this fact, nonprofits are currently getting more and more creative in their attempts to “get in front of” their givers.

Most nonprofits are expending huge financial resources to gain an audience with their givers. In their fundraising efforts, these organizations rely on direct mail, email, and relational connections. These methods can be very hard to maintain. This, however, is an area where churches have an advantage.

The church has a unique moment, 52 times per year, to engage with their givers in a real and meaningful way. What is that moment? The 90 seconds during the typical offering.

However, churches rarely handle this moment well. They most often fail to make the most of those 52 opportunities. In many churches, the offering is treated almost as an afterthought. It’s clear not much planning or time has gone into this opportunity. Instead of using this time in a manner that would excite and engage their givers, they allow tradition, routine, fear of the “money conversation,” and other baggage dictate how these 90 seconds are handled. What if you could use this moment—this precious 90 seconds—to stir the hearts of your givers and galvanize a life of generosity? Read on. This resource will show you how.

WHY
COMMUNICATE
WITH
YOUR
GIVERS?

For many years, church leaders relied upon the giver's loyalty to his or her church. In years past, giving to your church was simply an understood part of church involvement. This is not necessarily the case any longer. Today people give generously to those causes and passions closest to their hearts. Millennials, in particular, respond to giving differently than other generations, responding in large to convenience and specific causes. Church giving is no longer an understood reality. Today we live in a cause-oriented culture. The act of church giving has shifted from church-centric to giver-specific. This giver-specific shift is consistent with the need to shepherd the heart of the Christ-follower.

WHY COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR GIVERS?

CONT'D

Giver communication is a discipleship tool. What does your giver seek in this environment?

- Givers and potential givers seek relational connection with your church. Relational connections with your church make giving to your church much more compelling.
- Givers want the story. We are a people of narrative. Givers and potential givers thrive in the context of the story. The heart naturally engages differently when we hear and feel a part of the story. Jesus was the master storyteller. A person who feels engaged in the story of the church will give from their heart.
- Givers want to be equipped. People often fail to see the connection between their faith and their finances. This is because, instead of normalizing the “money conversation,” the church has made it seem off limits. There is amazing spiritual development that occurs at the intersection of faith and finances. In truth, people thirst to know how to live, manage their money, and give.
- Givers seek ongoing connection. People flourish when they receive consistent touches in the relational process. If you call your best friend only once a year, the relationship will begin to suffer. A husband who buys a card for his wife only on her birthday and their anniversary misses valuable opportunities to strengthen their marriage. Churches that learn to regularly and skillfully communicate with their givers and potential givers enrich those relationships. Through this communication, churches begin to form solid financial partnerships based on spiritual connection and development. Discipleship happens.

WHY
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CONT'D

In order to build and maintain a culture of generosity, churches must develop a consistent and systematic communication rhythm. When communicating with givers and potential givers, the prime communication opportunity is the 90-seconds during the offering.

There are at least seven elements a church must leverage in this moment. Most importantly, the rotation of these essentials in your worship experience will stir the heart of the giver, resulting in increased spiritual formation. The secondary benefit is the increased financial investment into the God-given mission of your church.

This 90-second offering moment is a wonderful opportunity to create both emotional and intellectual connection with those whose generosity makes the work of your church possible.

A large amount of planning and intentionality go into the church's weekend worship services. If you will put the same amount of preparation and purpose into this 90-second opportunity, your givers will grow spiritually and you will inspire new givers to become financial partners in your church's mission.

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ELEMENT 1: Gratitude

It is impossible to say “thank you” too often. Many churches have become far too proficient at neglecting their givers when it comes to regularly carrying out this simple act of appreciation: the “thank you.”

Many churches rely on the end-of-year contribution statement as a means to say thank you. Most church management software, however, is designed to quickly and efficiently provide transactional data, not say thank you. While efficiency can be a good thing, in this case, it is relationship that is most important. (For more information about the use of Contribution Statements to increase everyday giving, ask about our eBook, *Guide to the Use of Quarterly Contribution Statements*.)

Remember, the church should express the most heartfelt and sincere thank you in a giver’s world.

ELEMENT 2:

Theological truth from a God-centered perspective

Generosity flows freely from the heart of God. Pastor and author Tim Keller says, “If we do not have a heart to be generous, we have never understood the gospel.”

Givers want to know who God is and how he interacts with them. Take a moment to unpack the character of God. Share stories of the Creator’s faithfulness, trustworthiness, and generosity. This reminds our givers why we give: because He first gave.

Never be afraid of good theology. As A.W. Tozer points out, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” It is spiritually healthy to engage in conversation surrounding theological truth—even conversations on the topic of generosity.

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ELEMENT 3:

Theological truth from the giver's perspective

How does this 90 second offering moment impact the core spiritual growth of the giver? Will the giver's gift really store up treasure in heaven? Do we really reap what we sow? Connecting theological truths to a believer's behavior can change his or her worldview and, as a result, their moment-to-moment lifestyle.

At its core, giving is an act of faith. When givers make a financial investment into the life of the church, what statement are they making? Effectively they are saying, "Instead of tightly clinging to my financial resources, I will trust in the faithfulness of God. I believe He is who He says He is."

In this 90 second offering moment, we can help givers realize that when they release a financial gift to the church, that exchange is only between them and God. This is a moment of pure worship that expands the heart and faith experience.

ELEMENT 4:

Connecting the gift to the vision

Givers are people of dreams, aspirations, and hope. People love to give to those things close to their hearts. Regularly sharing your church's vision will connect the heart of the giver, as well as their dreams, to the vision of the church.

Vision answers the question, "Why should I give to your church?" Sometimes people will give marginally out of guilt, obligation, or even loyalty. Connection to the vision allows radical giving to occur based on a real heart-connection.

As stated earlier, we are a people of story. Americans are currently spending almost 11 billion dollars per year on movies, and that's just in theaters. According

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to Romance Writers of America, another 10 billion dollars is spent on romance novels annually in the US. We are indeed a people who respond to the narrative.

There are different ways the church can share stories. They can be shared by video, through an interview, or by first-person account. The untold stories within the church can be an invaluable resource. These stories encapsulate the reasons people give to your church and should be fresh, relevant, and personal.

Sharing a good story will often take more than 90-seconds. That's okay. Ninety seconds is not a hard and fast rule, and you should have permission to go longer when needed. Remember, this is an important part of your worship service. Don't relegate it to an element of only mild importance.

When we enter into the heart of the giver, it is remembered. A giver will remember an inspiring story of life change far longer than an extra worship song or five extra minutes of a sermon. These stories connect directly with the heart of the giver. These stories reinforce the fact that they and their giving can, and do, make a difference.

Stories don't have to be elaborate productions. You can say something as simple as, "Last week, your generosity helped pay an overdue electric bill of a single mother before her service was disconnected. Your giving allowed us to provide two clean water wells in Kenya. Over 60 families will benefit from these wells. Your continued financial support helped reach out to over 300 college students at nearby City College. There is so much more I could share with you, but what I want you all to know is your giving makes a difference - an eternal difference, so thank you! I can't wait to see the impact of your generosity in the coming weeks and months."

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There are many other ways to engage the giver. Introduce a person directly impacted by their giving. Explain how the church has invested in a unique opportunity that is largely unknown. Let people know, in some detail, how generous giving has allowed the church to_____.

There is no doubt stories create lasting emotional impact that increases giving.

ELEMENT 5: Celebration

If it's true that "we are what we eat," then it's also true "organizations become what they celebrate." Connect the offering moment to something that is valued by the church community and important to the church's mission.

Explain that we give so_____ can happen. For example, celebrate a baptism as part of the offering moment; present a check to a local mission organization during that 90 second time frame; be creative. The goal here is to align the church's mission with the heart of the giver through these mini-celebrations.

ELEMENT 6: Modeling

The church is, in most cases, free to address most hot-button issues. One of the most glaring exceptions, it seems, is giving. Giving, however, is an issue of spiritual formation and it should be discussed.

Because there is very little discussion on this topic, there are a lot of unanswered questions. How do people give? What is someone's emotional reaction when they give? What motivates people to give? How can people get out of debt in order to give more?

There is little that makes a greater impact than pulling back the curtain on the decision making process of

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trusted leaders. When a couple explains how they redirected money saved for a home renovation to go toward the fight against sex trafficking, the impact is greatly multiplied.

Choose these stories carefully. We are not seeking to elevate the giver; instead we want to allow these stories to provide insight into some of the questions people have about giving.

ELEMENT 7: Leadership examples

Does my pastor give? Does he have “skin in the game?” Is the church his first place of choice when it comes to his giving?

People need to know that their leaders believe in the church’s mission. An occasional story illustrating a leader’s giving is invaluable. No financial numbers should be shared; you only need to provide examples of engagement by the church’s leadership.

If I, as a giver, know my pastor gives 13% of his income to the church, I will likely engage with my faith and finances in a more committed manner.

BONUS ELEMENT

Giving from outside the worship experience is rapidly becoming the cultural norm. Your church should have a goal for the amount of income it receives from sources other than the worship service (i.e., online giving, mobile giving, etc.)

Our culture is fully engaged in today's electronic culture. From methods like Amazon's "One Click" payments, Starbucks' mobile device payments, and online banking, it is now unusual for people to carry cash and even more unusual to carry checks. In today's electronic culture, your goal should be at least 70% of your overall giving coming through nontraditional means.

You must ensure your offering moment celebrates all of your church's available on-ramps for giving. For example, show on a screen how to download an app to give. Challenge people to try the system. Test it right then. You will also want to make sure your website giving portal is very mobile-friendly and easy to use. The more you talk about these methods, the more normal they become.

GIVING ON-RAMPS

What are the various
giving on-ramps
available to churches?

- Giving in the worship service by basket or plate
- Giving before, during, or after the worship service with a box in or near the worship space
- Online banking through the giver's bank
- Online via the church website (prefer no required registration)
- Mobile giving (this method is becoming increasingly more popular)
- Mail (Yes, USPS, snail mail... some people still use and prefer this)
- Drop gift off at the church office

How do I introduce these new on-ramps during the 90-second offering moment?

You can say something like, “We’ve come to our time of community with giving as an act of worship. Many of us give here in the worship service, while others have worshiped this week by giving through their bank, online through our website, or by mail. Regardless of how you give, we want to celebrate your giving – your act of worship – as a Christ follower.”

A great way to normalize giving through some of the less-traditional methods is to have your pastor, or another church leader, tell his story. One leader did it this way:

You may notice in the worship times here, Jill and I don’t put a gift in the basket. [Intentional Pause] I know, you’re thinking, ‘What? Our pastor (or other leader) doesn’t give?’ Jill and I believe in this church and its mission with all our hearts. Each month, the very first check we send is sent through our bank’s online banking system and it goes here, to Cedar Ridge Church. It’s an automatic recurring payment so we never miss a month. We believe it is the best

investment we make each month and we consider it an honor to support the work of Cedar Ridge. You should know that 13% of our income goes right here, to this church. There is no place on earth we’d rather give to than right here. So, while you won’t see us drop a check in the basket on Sundays, we are definitely all in.

There are churches that have made the decision to stop passing a plate or basket during worship. So many were giving through non-traditional methods and so few were giving during the service, they felt it was a negative reinforcement of the value of giving. The solution for many of these churches was to first elevate the offering moment as described in this eBook.

Next, they made the decision to stop collecting an offering during worship. Instead, they placed highly visible giving boxes in strategic locations near the worship space and directed people to give using these boxes. They explained that the boxes were simply one of their many giving on-ramps. The offering moment remains even without the basket passing.

NEXT STEPS

So what next? Here are four practical ways to engage your givers and make the offering moment a priority at your church:

1. **Decide to make the offering moment as equal a priority as the worship and preaching.**
2. **Assign one person to be responsible for the planning and execution of this moment.** They will have to be on the worship planning team or at least high level planning meetings to ensure this gets the priority it deserves.
3. **Record and evaluate each worship offering moment in your staff meeting each week.** This type of evaluation will provide constructive criticism that will give accountability and ensure an increasingly engaging offering moment in your worship service.
4. **Share stories and tangible experiences of generosity that your congregation can relate to.** This will require creating the process to get stories from your team and allow everyone on your team to contribute to the priority of this moment.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your interest in this important concept. Over the years, our culture has changed dramatically, but very little has changed in regard to the offering moment. This 90 seconds is still a great opportunity to engage and excite your giver base. This opportunity is available to you 52 times per year. Why not make the most of it?



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