

'Close the Doors!': Pastor's Shocking Fundraising Tactic Caught on Camera

When it comes to church conferences and offerings, there's always a fine line between boldness and backlash.

Gospel legend and pastor Marvin Sapp found himself walking that tightrope after a video went viral showing him telling ushers to "close them doors" during a fundraising moment at a recent Christian conference.

Sapp didn't mince words in the clip: "I said close the doors. Ushers close the doors, close the doors. Close the doors. We all going to leave together. Y'all ain't going no place but to the restaurant."

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That moment, caught on camera, raised eyebrows and lit up social media with critics accusing him of manipulation. But Sapp pushed back strongly against the claims, defending his actions as biblical and necessary—as reported by The Christian Post.

"Some have taken issue with a particular moment when I instructed the ushers, rather firmly, to close the doors during the offering," Sapp wrote in a Facebook post. "To those unfamiliar with the church context or who may not regularly attend worship gatherings, this has been misinterpreted as holding people hostage, as well as offensive. That was never my intent."

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His goal? To raise \$40,000 for the conference's budget by

asking 1,000 people in the room and 1,000 watching online to donate \$20 each. Ministers onstage were expected to give \$100, because as Sapp said, it “costs to be up here.”

He further explained, “The truth is, when finances are being received in any worship gathering, it is one of the most vulnerable and exposed times for both the finance and security teams. Movement during this sacred exchange can be distracting and, at times, even risky. My directive was not about control it was about creating a safe, focused, and reverent environment for those choosing to give, and for those handling the resources.”

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Sapp cited 1 Chronicles 29 to justify his method, referencing how King David called the people to give openly and generously toward the building of the temple. “Specific amounts were recorded not because God needed their money, but because the people needed to show their commitment to the vision and because stewardship demands accountability,” he wrote.

Still, there’s a real risk when leaders blur the line between encouragement and coercion—especially in a worship setting.

While Scripture encourages generosity, closing doors and singling out giving amounts can come off as pressuring rather than inspiring. Church leaders should tread carefully, especially in an age where actions are instantly scrutinized online. Boldness in leadership is one thing, but spiritual authority must never become a tool for control.

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