

6 Ways Not to Take an Offering

I've seen it all when it comes to church offerings. Once when I attended an outdoor service in Nigeria, deacons used wheelbarrows and pickup trucks to collect money because more than 500,000 people were in the audience. Yet I know a pastor in Malawi who collects the equivalent of 80 cents in his offering plate each Sunday because his members are so poor. With that money, he has planted several churches.

Giving is a huge part of the Christian life. Jesus encouraged generosity; the first disciples collected offerings; and the apostle Paul said, "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7b). Paul taught us that collecting money to support the church's mission should be done with integrity and that believers should respond with generous hearts.

But even in those days, some Christians resisted the idea of giving to God's work. Others used strong-arm tactics to get their hands in people's pockets. We are still dealing with this problem 2,000 years later. Here are six of the most reckless tactics used today to raise funds in church:

1. **The endless appeal:** Some preachers drone on and on for 45 minutes to collect an offering—and then they take another 15 minutes to pass the buckets. This is rude and insensitive—and it reveals a lack of faith on the part of leaders. You don't have to talk people out of their money or hold them hostage until they give out of frustration. Trust God to supply the need rather than begging.
2. **The salesman's extortion:** Certain slick preachers in our movement are known for their uncanny ability to open people's wallets. But these fundraising "skills" are more akin to those of a used car salesman than a

minister of the gospel. They promise magical benefits to those who give large amounts. They also set deadlines. I once heard a preacher suggest that if people gave “right now,” their unsaved children would find salvation!

Never give in response to manipulation. Paul taught us that when we sow, we will reap. But in the same passage, he also said if we sow to the flesh we will “reap corruption” (Gal. 6:8). If you give in response to a prompting of the Holy Spirit, you will be blessed. But if you give because the preacher twisted your arm or used pressure tactics, your gift will not be blessed. Paul told us to give “not grudgingly or out of necessity” (2 Cor. 9:7).

3. **The give-to-get tradeoff:** There is no question that God blesses generous people. If you keep your hands open to God by giving, He will open a channel of blessing for you. But God is not a slot machine, and His goodness is not for sale. Never believe a preacher who says you can buy the Holy Spirit’s anointing. And never follow a preacher who guarantees you will get a new house or a new car if you put a certain amount in the offering plate.
4. **The Holy Ghost auction:** Numerous times I’ve heard a preacher announce that he needs a certain number of people to give \$1,000—and he will wait for hands to go in the air. Next, he needs \$500 gifts, \$250 and so on. Within a few minutes, the church has become a cattle auction. Sometimes the donors are asked to stand—suggesting that God blesses rich people but not the widow on a fixed income who doesn’t have means to give a big amount.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they liked to blow trumpets in public to announce they were giving to the poor. He told them: “When you do your charitable deeds, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your

charitable deeds may be in secret" (Matt. 6:3-4). Can you imagine Jesus asking rich people to stand and give their large checks while everyone in the audience applauds them? He actually pointed out a poor widow and raved about her tiny gift.

5. **The railing judgment:** I cringe when I hear pastors tell people they will be under a curse if they don't tithe. I don't tithe to appease God's anger; I give more than a tithe because I love to share God's goodness. We should never put a guilt trip on people while collecting money. The church is no place for threats. Zacchaeus was a greedy tax collector, but Jesus did not attack him for his thievery; He extended mercy—and this melted Zacchaeus' heart and made him a lavish giver.
6. **The pathetic apology:** Sometimes we act timid about collecting offerings, maybe because the world thinks all Christians are fakes and that churches are "all about money." But we have nothing to apologize for! We are involved in the greatest mission on planet Earth, and God Himself supplies the funds needed to evangelize the world.

When we collect offerings, we are engaging in a holy process. God is just as much involved in the offering as He is in worship, the preaching of the Word or the demonstration of spiritual gifts. God allows us to be His vessels to give, and then He rewards us abundantly so we can give more. The church has been sustained for 2,000 years by supernatural giving. He is in our midst. While we seek to become more generous, let's learn to be more faithful in the way we steward God's money.

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