

The Offering as Part of Worship

Introducing the Offering:

The offering should be an integrated part of the worship service. A word of introduction to the offering is often helpful and essential for it to be a meaningful time of worship. A passionate informed introduction, that may include a verse or two from Scripture, can highlight this activity as one that represents and enhances our relationship with God.

There are many different words in Scripture related to the act of ‘giving’. Unfamiliar scripture verses, which are clearly articulated, can bring meaning and understanding to the experience of giving. It can also be the creative bridge that keeps the experience of ‘giving’ an act of worship. It is important to avoid the offering experience becoming an “intermission” in the worship service. When the offertory introductions are carefully planned, it will form the bridge:

- from hearing the Word to doing the Word,
- from an intellectual to a physical expression of our faith, and
- from emotion and feeling to action.

Focusing the offering:

Some traditional offertory introductions may have drawn attention to gathering monies for the church budgets: programs, building maintenance and the salary of the pastor(s). The introduction may have overlooked the fact that giving is an essential part of our worship and witness. It needs to be more than an effort to persuade folks to give as much money as possible.

We need to intentionally focus the offering as a response of gratitude for blessings we received.

“No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed; each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.” (Deuteronomy 16: 16,17).

Offertory scripture passages are to be used as reminders of the central reasons for Christians to be ‘generous givers’. It is our expression of our love for our God. It is our trust and faith that His grace sets us free. Sacrificial giving and generosity needs to be affirmed and encouraged time and again.

Clear language:

Sometimes the offertory introduction can be an explanation what the offering is all about. One can gather attention with a sentence like: “The offering this morning is for... or I want you all to know its intended use. ...”

It is also important to use proper language:

- The term “collection” may be associated with the secular world (collection agencies have created some negative feelings)
- Churches do not *take* offerings
- Worshippers *give* offerings

Sharing Scripture:

Following are some ways to *introduce* offertory Scripture verses:

- *"Hear the Word of the Lord regarding our offering —"*
- *"It is no casual act to relate to God's work with our money. Listen to these words from the Scriptures—"*
- *"It is the time of accountability. The Apostle Paul has these instructions for us—"*
- *"Here are some guidelines for giving from the Holy Scriptures—"*
- *"Priorities figure into our giving. Listen to this—"*
- *"Through our offerings, we affirm the leadership of God. Listen to this—"*
- *"A part of preparation for worship is our preparation for giving. Listen to this—"*
- *"Our offerings get us into the mainstream of God's work through the church. Listen to these words from the Scriptures—"*
- *"What is right for each of us is ours to decide. Listen to these instructions—"*
- *"We read in the (O T or N T) this instruction for giving offerings to God—"*

The following Scripture sentences are printed in the New International Version. Other versions and translations such as Today's English Version (Good News Bible) or The Message may also be helpful. Clarity in context is essential for effective use of offertory Scripture verses.

Scripture Verses focusing on 'Stewardship':

Deuteronomy 16:

^{16b} No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed:

¹⁷ Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

Proverbs 3:

⁹ Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops;

Matthew 6:

²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Luke 12:

⁴⁸ From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Acts 20:

³⁵ Remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

1 Corinthians 4:

¹ So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.

² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

1 Corinthians 10:

²⁶for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."

2 Corinthians 9:

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

2 Corinthians 9:

⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Peter 4:

¹⁰Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

¹¹If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

*Scripture Verses focusing on 'Benevolence':***Proverbs 11:**

²⁵ A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.

Matthew 25:

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Galatians 6:

⁹Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Hebrews 6:

¹⁰God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

Hebrews 13:

¹⁵Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name.

¹⁶And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

1 John 3:

¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?

Scripture Verses focusing on 'Thanksgiving':

Psalm 100:

³ Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Psalm 103:

² Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Proverbs 3:

⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

2 Corinthians 9:

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Scripture Verses focusing on 'Trust in God':

Matthew 6:

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

Luke 12:

¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

John 3:

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

2 Corinthians 9:

⁷ For God loves a cheerful giver.

⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

1 Timothy 6:

¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Scripture Verses focusing on 'Living as Imitators of Christ Jesus':

Matthew 5:

¹⁶ Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Romans 12:

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

1 Corinthians 6:

¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.

2 Corinthians 8:

⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Ephesians 5:

¹Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children

²and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 Timothy 6:

¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Scripture Verses focusing on 'Worship':**1 Chronicles 29:**

¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.

Psalm 96:

⁷ Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

⁸ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.

Psalm 116:

¹² How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.

¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

Revelation 5:

¹²"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

Scripture Verses focusing on 'Submission':

Matthew 5:

²³"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Mark 8:

³⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

³⁶What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

James 1:

²⁵But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.

Offertory prayers:

Most offerings described throughout the Bible, were personal acts of praise and thanksgiving to God. They were presented in a worship setting and were accepted and blessed by the priest. Our offerings during worship are never to be casual activities. They are rather acts of trust in God, which are expressed in tangible ways, and should be accompanied by prayer.

In some churches the pastor prays before the offering is given. A relevant offertory Scripture verse, or passage, reassuring worshipers of their privilege to give, may be more appropriate and meaningful than a prayer before the offering. Note that it was *after* Jesus received the five loaves and the fish, that He prayed to God to bless the gifts (Mark 6:38-42).

Some guidelines for the preparation of effective offertory prayers are that prayers ought to:

- be spoken or written with a congregation and a purpose in mind,
- clarify what persons are doing when they give,
- highlight what we have received in Christ, redemption and sanctification,
- contain an act of blessing on the gift and the giver,
- speak of the evidence of faith which the prayers demonstrate,
- be an opportunity to teach, never a time to plead or threaten,
- highlight the offering as a time of witnessing,
- eliminate the idea that our gifts are dues or taxes,
- speak of the partnership which is at the heart of the gospel,
- be deliberately spoken,
- be direct and brief, and clearly articulated,
- be designed as an expression of gratitude to God,
- be seen as a priestly function, and
- be spoken on behalf of the people, not at the people.

Offertory prayers ought always to be directed to the focus of God's redeeming work on earth: i.e. the Bible, the cross, a Communion table, the presence of the Holy Spirit in our worship service, God's mission work in the world. Through this act there is always a feeling of reaching out to, and a feeling of participation in the work of Christ's kingdom.

Samples of Offertory Prayers:

On Stewardship:

- Lord, it isn't easy to decide how much we each should give. Thank you for the wise counsel of your church and the good examples of our parents who have helped us understand our accountability. May we not grow weary in our giving. For Jesus' sake. Amen.
- Help us, O God, to be unselfish in our giving so that we may know what it is to trust your love in Christ. Amen.
- At your direction, Lord Jesus, we desire to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Money does not earn us a place in heaven. Our money does represent an earthly treasure that we return to you. Be pleased to use these gifts to your glory. Amen.
- God, we know that you are the Creator. You made everything. You own everything, but also we know that you give each of us a partnership for a while. We appreciate your generosity, and we also would like to be generous, for Jesus' sake. Amen.
- Thank you, Lord, that it is becoming easier for me to give. Once I had to struggle to find reasons to share, and now it seems so good and right and natural. Am I growing up a bit, Lord? Take my gift today and blend it with all who worship here, that together, we may be a part of building your kingdom. In the name of Jesus. Amen.
- Lord Jesus, before whom all of us will one day give an account, grant that there may be no question about our stewardship. Keep us alert to what we hold in trust for you. As your hand has been open to us, open our hands to others. Amen.
- Lord, who by your grace has made us strong where we were weak and wise where we were confused, illuminate us, your stewards, in the work of the ministry of your Word. Let none be weak or lost because of their unwillingness to give. Let your Spirit translate these gifts into your active love. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
- Dear Lord, it was easy and a joy to give today, for we gave out of the abundance you have permitted us to have. Keep us sensitive, Lord, to the hurts and hungers of those who have little. It is here that we find meaning for our offerings this day. Amen.
- Thank you, Lord, for our lives, for this church, and for the hope that is within us. Save us from all selfish thoughts as we give out of our abundance to bring life and love to your world. Through Jesus Christ, bringer of good news. Amen.

- God, renew our spirits by your Holy Spirit, that our work for you may not be a burden to us, but a delight; and give us a mighty love for you that our obedience to your will may be our supreme joy. We rejoice in our abundance only because we can generously give to others in your name. Amen.
- Thank you, Lord, for showing your love and grace to us. What we have seen and felt in our own lives we now want to share with those who have not seen and do not know. We now return these gifts for your service. For Jesus' sake. Amen.
- As your stewards, O Christ, give us the full desire to be faithful to the gifts you have given us. We are grateful that a part of this offering goes to support ... (*list special causes supported by your church.*) In Jesus' name. Amen.
- Spirit of God, again today there are many guests and new friends at worship with us. Each week persons such as these give hundreds of dollars that help in the community ministry of your church. Let them and all of us know the joy of generosity. Amen.
- Lord, we know that you are the Creator. You made everything. We appreciate your generosity and would like to be generous with your church. We pray that you will accept these gifts as you have accepted us. In the name of the Saviour, Jesus. Amen.
- Lord, I am very conscious of how carefully I hold on to things. I especially like to hold on to money. The more I get, the more powerful I feel. However, in the shadow of your cross, I willingly divest myself of power—that others may eat and others may see and others may know of your love for all of us. Take my power, given in Jesus' name. Amen.
- Suddenly, Lord, we find this hour of worship very personal. You know whether our offering is generous or only another evidence of our selfishness. Forgive those of us who do not take seriously our part in supporting your work in our world. Amen.

On Benevolence:

- At your instruction, Lord, we are trying to be more aware of the needs of others and less and less absorbed in selfish concerns, so we pray that you will sharpen our minds and dedicate our skills to support these offerings that we bring. Amen.
- Lord, we can't do everything.
 We can't feed the entire world's hungry.
 We can't clothe all the naked.
 We can't teach all the illiterate.
 We can't help all who are displaced.
 However, we can do something, and *that's why we give.*
 Strengthen and confirm your church through us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

- Gracious Lord, your caring for us, as revealed in Christ, causes us to rejoice that a part of our offering today will go to provide food and life's necessities to the people of Africa. Help them to feel loved. Amen.
- Teach us, Lord, that we may not be deaf to those who cry out for bread and hope in this broken world. May these offerings not come from our abundance, but from our brokenness. We do not give because we are forced to give but because we have heard their cries and want to incarnate your love and care. Amen.
- May these offerings be the footprints of our love as they bring hope to desperate people. As your people, we wait for your sensitizing Spirit to keep us alive to specific ways we can be your children in this troubled world. Amen.
- Lord, we read that the love of money can be the root of all evil. We also know that our gifts can be the source of help and hope to the desperate, hopeless people of this world. Grant your Spirit to be upon all who administer the gifts we bring this day. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
- Almighty and everlasting God, grant unto the people of this congregation all things that are needed for their full participation in the work of your kingdom. May their offerings and sacrifices this day confirm the work of all who feed the hungry, all who protect the children, all who shelter the desperate, and all who advance your truth through their preaching and teaching. We accept your blessing in gratitude. Amen.

On Witnessing:

- Thank you, Lord, that your church has awakened us to the world you sent your Son to save. Forgive our narrowness and set our love and gifts winging to all people and all nations, that we may be messengers of your peace. Amen.
- Some of us, O Lord, have wandered in the wilderness long enough. We are ready to move into our promised land where we may claim our own responsibilities. Your gifts and guidance have brought us here, and we are grateful. May these, our tithes and offerings, help lead others through their wildernesses and to your presence. In the name of Jesus. Amen.
- Spirit of God, we are so often caught up in our getting and spending. We forget that it is people and human resources that can make a difference in our world. Therefore, with our offerings, we pray that you will multiply our service in your kingdom. Amen.
- Forgive us for taking your love so casually, and your church for granted. We need you, and our world needs your church. May our gifts support your acts of love. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

- Lord, I sometimes wish you would drop leaflets from the sky, but there will be no leaflets, no missionaries, no worldwide witness unless we take our feet there or support the work of others. Let these offerings send the Word. Amen.
- As our lips praise you and our spirits seek your power, so our hands provide the support for your church at work today. Thank you for giving us this privilege. Amen.

On Thanksgiving:

- God, we have not heard your voice shouting from a cloud, nor have we seen your strong hand reaching down to part the waters, but we have heard your gentle voice through your people and your church. We have seen your power in the hands of others and in our hands. So we rejoice with loud hallelujahs and with these gifts. Amen.
- We thank you, Lord, that we can have a part in your ministry. We thank you for your church that has brought us together. We thank you for your grace that makes us anxious and able to give. May your Holy Spirit prosper our work and worship. For Jesus' sake. Amen.
- Thank you, Lord, for this beautiful place of peace where truth is alive and well, and where your people find strength in each other and in you. Bless every act of worship, but especially bless these offerings as they express our deep gratitude for life and love and hope. Amen.
- Thank you, Lord, for moments of worship where I am clearly reminded of how much I have been given. Sometimes I forget and think that I am lucky, but here in worship, I know that I am loved, and I am grateful. Here is my offering. It says clearly how grateful I am to you. Amen.
- In a world tired of hearing words, grant, O Lord, that we may do a little preaching with our offerings. Let them speak clearly of our gratitude for your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- Lord, these gifts do not represent our spiritual taxes to run your church. Neither are they our weekly dues for membership. They are all and only our grateful response to your love and mercy. Thank you, Lord, for knowing us and caring for us. Amen.
- We are grateful, O God, that your Spirit is at work within us, nudging and stretching us, and causing us to grow, and to think, and to present ourselves here to worship. As we are surrounded by friends, we sense again that we could never live alone. Let our offerings be an expression of our gratitude, and may they help to spread the Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.
- Lord, last Sunday there was \$5,200 on the altar when I prayed. I know this money comes from grateful worshipers, and I am certain that again this morning these people here are saying that they love you. Amen.

- At your suggestion, Lord, we give evidence of our love and concern for your kingdom. Our partnership with you is important to us. Accept these sacrifices as offerings given in love. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

As Expressions of Love

- Lord, we know that when it comes to love, words are sometimes cheap and professions can be superficial. We seek to express our love for you, not by mere words but by an act of self-denial as we place our gifts on this altar. Receive our gifts we pray, as vivid evidence of our love for you. Amen.
- Lord, learning to love is a long apprenticeship. As we stand before your cross, we understand how much we have yet to learn about love. Out of God's love, you came as his gift to our world. May our love for this world and your church be seen in our gifts this day. Amen.
- Lord, we present these gifts not as a tax write-off but out of love. We do care about this church, and we do want to energize your will in our community and in our world. In the name of the Creator, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- With our lips, we praise you, O Lord, and with our offerings, we show our true loyalty to you and your church. Amen.
- Dear Lord, love is forgiving, but we are so young in love. Learning to love seems a long apprenticeship. As far as we can know, Lord, we do love you and this great and wonderful world you sustain. May our gifts this day say something of our love for you. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

On Serving God and His Church

- God, you have given us all work to do. You have endowed us with potentials to fulfill our God-given tasks. Thank you, Lord, for needing us. Thank you for allowing us to be an important part of your plan to bring in your kingdom. May our gifts presented today clearly indicate our commitment to this task. For Jesus' sake. Amen.
- By your power, O Lord, may these offerings be turned into energy through the work of your church. For the sake of Jesus. Amen.
- We thank you, Lord, for the privilege of supporting a church that teaches our children, supports our youth, enriches our families, and cares for our aged. Amen.
- As the original twelve disciples offered themselves to you, O Lord, let these gifts indicate our desire to be a part of your will and your kingdom in our day. Thank you, Lord, for calling us and sending us. Amen.

- Dear Lord, it is a mystery that you have decided to work through persons like us. However, we believe that you do and that you have empowered us to be helpers. May your strong guiding Spirit bless every act of generosity in this offering. Amen.

Submission

- Eternal God, we do not have lambs, doves, or pigeons to offer to you this holy day, but there is blood in our offerings—our blood. Some of us have worked long and hard for what we bring. This is not a casual act. We want and need your blessing. Amen.
- Lord, if I had a hammer, I'd pound it!
If I had a bell, I'd ring it!
If I had a song, I'd sing it!
All I have this morning is money,
So I bring it! Amen.
- Lord, our gifts are not casually presented. There is sacrifice in each of them. We have prospered, and our gifts are prayers that your will may prosper in the hearts of all who worship here today. For the salvation of the world, we give and pray. Amen.
- Lord, no gift from you is at our complete disposal. Therefore, in this act of worship through giving, we acknowledge our giftedness and our dependence. What we can become is in your hand and plan. Amen.

Communion:

- Lord, we believe that you are always listening. Hear now this prayer of your hungry people. We have filled our plates with the fast food and the junk food of this world and have neglected the Bread, which would satisfy. We want to be at your table with the people of God. May these tithes and offerings bring us closer to the table of worship. For Jesus' sake. Amen.
- Lord, as we often lift high the cup and the bread in acts of dedication, we now lift up these evidences of our love and sacrifice. May these offerings bring healing and hope to the world. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- Dear Lord, we have gathered our gifts together in this offering. Alone we are weak. Together we are strong. Let your strong Will be exercised through these gifts which we dedicate in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.