

10 Ideas to Improve Giving in Your Church

By *Chuck Lawless*

Something's amiss in the North American church when believers average giving about 2-3 percent of their income to the church each year. Such shallow giving limits our ministry possibilities and hinders our getting the gospel to the nations.

If you want to increase the giving in your congregation, consider these steps:

1. **Teach what the Bible teaches.** While some debate whether the New Testament teaches a tithe (10%), it is clear God expects believers to give cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7), regularly (1 Cor. 16:2), and sacrificially (Mark 12:41-44). If we don't teach this mandate intentionally and passionately, we should not be surprised when our congregations don't give. Fear of teaching about financial stewardship results only in a greater need to teach about it later.
2. **Model sacrificial giving.** Years ago, my wife and I made a commitment to give more – not less – to the work of God *any time we worry about finances*. For us, financial worry is typically an indicator that either (a) we aren't spending and saving wisely, or (b) we aren't trusting God like we should. Our philosophy is that we should give to God's work until it hurts – that is, until it stretches us our faith. Only then am I comfortable challenging others to give more.
3. **Passionately and clearly cast a God-sized vision for your congregation.** God's people are not opposed to giving; they are opposed to supporting a weak or unclear purpose. Churches that seek dollars simply to keep their doors open to minister to their own people aren't likely to garner support from a young generation committed to the nations. Ask your congregation to state your church's vision in a single sentence; if most can't do it, I suspect you're missing out on financial support as well.
4. **Teach budgeting and spending – not just giving.** I'm amazed by how many of my students operate without a budget. For some, debilitating debt is already keeping them from the mission field. Others live from week-to-week, yet pay too little attention to their spending habits. God's people will give more to His work if we help them first learn to budget and spend well.
5. **Train children and students to give.** I tithe today is because my first pastor taught me to do so. From my first paycheck as a grocery stocker at age 16, to my first paycheck as a pastor (\$45 per week in 1981), to my most recent paycheck as a seminary dean, I still hear my pastor say, "Give God the first part, and trust Him with the rest." What began as a step of obedience, and at times was a step of faith, has now become an act of worship. God has *never* let me down.
6. **Promote incremental increases.** Sometimes, the concept of giving a certain percentage is frightening to folks who have given only minimally. Rather than challenge them to leap into a tithe, challenge them to increase their giving incrementally. Each increased percentage may still be a step of faith. Even an extra \$5.00 per family per week can strengthen your church's work.
7. **Tell the stories of changed lives.** If you want your church to give more, show them what God is doing through the church. Plan testimonies in the services. Invite missionaries to speak. Highlight a different church ministry each month. Ask

staff members to send regular emails, putting the spotlight on transformed lives. Ministries themselves seldom attract more dollars, but changed people do.

8. **Lead your church to drip with financial integrity.** Review your church's process for receiving and distributing funds. Who counts and deposits the funds? How are the records handled? How are expenditures approved? How many people sign checks? Are the books audited annually? The work we do is God's work, and anything less than absolute integrity will lack His blessing.
9. **Challenge the church with a "Day of Sacrificial Giving."** Invite your church members to give one week more than they've ever given. For some, that might mean giving a tithe for the first time. For others, that might mean increasing their giving for one week to the breaking point – to a point of faithful discomfort. Some will develop a pattern of increased giving from this one challenge.
10. **Guide your church to pray as Jesus taught us, "Give us this day our daily bread."** This simple and direct prayer recognizes that all we have is a blessing from God. Perhaps if we prayed this way each day, we would remember that nothing we have is really ours – and consequently be willing to give back to God more than is His already.

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