

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

# Giving **is Good**

Resource Guide  
for Creating  
a Healthy  
Giving Culture

2 CORINTHIANS 8 AND 9



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## A LESSON FROM

# Lettuce Farming

### EVER WONDERED...

... how to effectively raise money to support the local church and ministry?

... the purpose of the offering call during a church service?

... how to foster a culture of generosity in your church?

A few years ago, I moved to a new home surrounded by lush greenery and mountain trees. One of the tasks I had to accomplish was finding the perfect spot to create my garden. As someone who likes to learn through experience, I embarked on a journey to locate the ideal location.

At first, I started with the basics - finding a spot that received at least six hours of sunlight. I bought all the necessary supplies and seeds and planted my garden in what I thought was the perfect place. Due to the intense summer heat, my garden barely produced anything in the first year.

Taking it as a lesson learned, I relocated my garden to a new spot and started again. Although it produced some vegetables, it was not enough to fully enjoy. My lettuce was the most affected, and I was disappointed again for the second year.

Finally, in the third year, I decided to educate myself on mountain gardening and lettuce cultivation. Following the recommendations, I planted my lettuce in a more shaded area early in the year. The result? I am now relishing fresh lettuce every day this spring.

It took me two years to realize what I could have learned in less than an hour!

Learning before doing can lead to better results in many areas of life. The purpose of this guide is to provide ideas and information that can help achieve positive outcomes, such as securing resources for ministry and helping members experience a more profound and transformative relationship with God. (2 Corinthians 9:8).





# The Asking Moment

## Appreciate Intentional Asking

Generosity reflects God's divine nature, making giving a good thing. During a church service, members give during the "offering call." In other places, and in the dictionary, this time is known as "the ask," which is a more descriptive way to define this moment.

Building a solid relationship based on trust and love for the church's mission makes the "ask" simple and natural. However, it is crucial for a church to recognize the significance of "the ask" and dedicate the time to honor it during church.

To effectively make the offering call, it is necessary to understand the giver's motive for donating and how their contribution to a particular fund aligns with their interests. Additionally, an impactful "ask" will:

- Transmit how much the church appreciates their contribution
- Promote a positive giving culture within the church community
- Recognize the transformative power of generosity

There are many ways to do an offering call. This guide is designed to inspire and support the person asking. **It has three parts:**

- The Formula
- Impactful Story Telling
- Starting Point: Bible verses to inspire

## Understand the Motivation to Give

Non-profit organizations across the globe rely on donations to fuel their causes. Donors are driven by their conviction in the organization's mission, their earned trust in the organization, and the call to contribute.

The Barna Group released *The State of Generosity* report in 2022 that evaluates giving in the Christian world. The results mirror what other studies have found worldwide over the past four decades. Their



research concludes the following of those who identify as Christian:

1. People give because of who they are; giving feels elemental to their identity.
2. People give when they feel appreciated.
3. People give when they know their gift has meaning.
4. People give when they believe the organization will use their contributions wisely.

These four elements give us the formula for an impactful offering call. Moreover, they give us a reason to nurture a culture of generosity in our congregations.

## Accept Money as a Resource

As Adventists, we believe in the importance of stewardship, which means taking responsibility for our actions and acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God. We value generosity, as it allows us to recognize that we are temporary caretakers of these gifts.

Money is a resource - neither bad nor good. However, as 1 Timothy 6:10 points out, "For 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."

Many people may struggle with the idea of asking for donations or leading an offering call in church. However, this verse serves as a reminder that money itself is not the issue; rather, the LOVE of money can lead to problems.

As Matthew 6:19-21 advises: it is wise to refrain from gathering material possessions on earth, as they can be easily lost or taken away. Instead, we should focus on storing our treasures in heaven, where they are safe from harm. Most importantly, it gives us the key phrase at the end of verse 21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The weekly "ask" or offering time can be a powerful tool. Picture a scenario where members willingly give back to show gratitude for the abundant blessings bestowed upon them by God, experiencing joy in giving rather than a sense of obligation. Unfortunately, this valuable teaching method about stewardship, faithful giving, and financial responsibility is often overlooked and undervalued.

Even a very basic offering call can express our appreciation and strengthen the relationship with our members. Thus, transforming this occasion into a meaningful experience. However, we can do better.





# Create a Healthy Giving Culture

Giving is a core part of an individual’s identity, bringing them a greater sense of purpose. Their contributions carry significant value, and they trust that the organization will utilize their gift effectively.

The purpose of our church, with the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to connect people to an abundant life with Jesus Christ while preparing them for His imminent return. When interacting with others, we prioritize values such as contagious kindness, servant’s heart, and hard work. Our decisions regarding service and ministry are made with great consideration, ensuring that they not only elicit enthusiasm among our members and employees but are also pertinent to the community and aligned with our mission.

A healthy giving culture starts with church leaders who are focused and clear on the Church’s purpose. If leaders understand that the offering call is an outreach moment, it gives the church an incredible opportunity to share the good news of God’s power and salvation. Then through consistent communication and the power of the Holy Spirit, leaders can ignite a spiritual revival among members and create a space for a generous outpouring of gifts to support ministry like Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

The gospel’s message revolves around the most generous, sacrificial, and impactful gift ever given – Jesus. As John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

In 2 Corinthians 9:10-14, Paul describes those who experience God’s grace are willing and joyful to give generously. Therefore, creating a compelling offering call is more than asking for money. It is an essential element that brings members closer to experiencing God’s transformative abundance and sacrificial love through acts of generosity. This moment allows members to actively engage and express their faith in God, and it has a significant impact beyond just monetary contributions.

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# Realize Giving is Good

A culture of generosity promotes the idea of using financial contributions to honor God and emphasizes how the church handles these gifts responsibly. Those involved in asking for support have the chance to connect individuals to a more abundant life with Jesus Christ and highlight how giving is a tangible expression of faith.

Research by The Barna Group in The State of Generosity reveals that those Christians who contribute to the church experience an increase in overall life satisfaction. The study examined faith, relationships, vocation, finance, and well-being. Their research revealed that those who gave enjoyed an average of 24% higher satisfaction across all areas than those who did not give.

This study supports what the Bible promises in Luke 6:38, “Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” And what the Bible says in Proverbs 3:9-10, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the first fruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.”

Picture a church where every member is propelled by a spirit of generosity and derives immense pleasure from giving. For them, giving is not just a duty but a privilege that offers both personal and communal benefits. Additionally, they actively participate in their communities to bring about positive change and address the needs of others. Moreover, they lead lives of abundance, as The State of Generosity report affirms and validates.

The word of God speaks the truth. Generosity reflects God’s divine nature, making giving a good thing. During the weekly offering call, there is a tremendous opportunity to encourage members to fully embrace their innate generosity and strengthen their relationship with Christ.

Let’s take the time to recognize and honor this “asking” moment!





# The Formula

To achieve a compelling offering call, including all six key components is vital. By seamlessly integrating each element into your “ask”, this giving moment will be clear and effective.

|   | Elements                     | Purpose   | Example  |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Welcome                      | The initial greeting is a crucial aspect that sets the tone for the service and encourages audience participation.                        | <i>Good morning and welcome to our church! We are excited to have you all with us today to celebrate Jesus. No matter where you come from, we believe God will do something miraculous in your life today.</i>   |
| 2 | Thank You                    | Expressing gratitude through a "Thank You" gesture is a way of recognizing and valuing the efforts of those who have already contributed. | <i>Before we get into this morning's message, we will take up this week's tithes and offerings. I want to extend a thank you to all the faithful givers that we have in the congregation.</i>  |
| 3 | Illustrative/ Personal Story | See pages 8-11 for examples   |  |
| 4 | "The Ask"                    | Encouraging members to take action in a transparent manner through the offering call can help establish trust and promote engagement.     | <i>To designate your offering, use the tithe envelope provided or give it online at <a href="http://adventistgiving.com">adventistgiving.com</a>. As we take up this offering, I thank you and pray that God will bless everyone who gives today. We are more than a congregation; we are the body of Christ on a mission, and I thank God for you. Today, the loose offering goes to _____ (refer to the offering calendar on the NCC website).</i> |
| 5 | Giving Impact                | Provides an insight into how giving supports the church's mission and objectives.   | <i>Sharing the gospel is the most important duty that anyone can undertake on this planet, and it's a responsibility that we share equally. By donating and relying on the Holy Spirit, we can effectively bring people closer to a fulfilling life in Jesus and help them prepare for His return. Your contributions help spread the gospel, and for that, I am grateful. Your generosity is crucial to supporting our ministry.</i>                |
| 6 | Prayer                       | When someone offers a prayer, they allow the Holy Spirit to work, which brings about positive change and growth.                          |  |

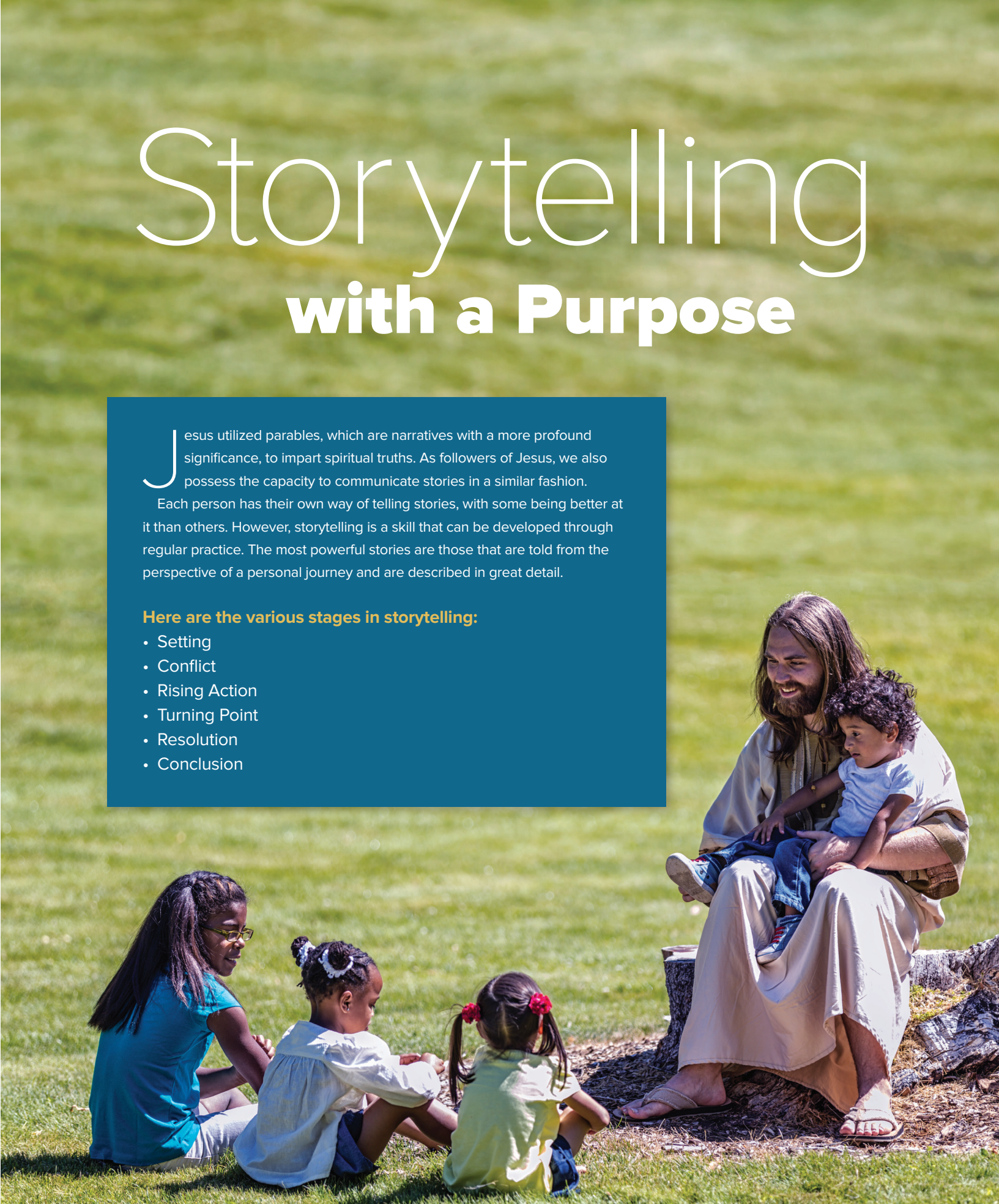
# Storytelling with a Purpose

Jesus utilized parables, which are narratives with a more profound significance, to impart spiritual truths. As followers of Jesus, we also possess the capacity to communicate stories in a similar fashion.

Each person has their own way of telling stories, with some being better at it than others. However, storytelling is a skill that can be developed through regular practice. The most powerful stories are those that are told from the perspective of a personal journey and are described in great detail.

**Here are the various stages in storytelling:**

- Setting
- Conflict
- Rising Action
- Turning Point
- Resolution
- Conclusion





# Storytelling Example 1



## Setting: Introduce time, place, and person

*Example: At the age of 12, my family and I relocated to a ranch-style home on one acre of land in Escondido, CA. The property was surrounded by fields and a small number of homes. In front of our house, there were three unusual trees.*

## Conflict: Introduce the issue, concern, or problem

*Example: After the first year, the leaves on the trees turned green. My dad wanted to cut them down, but I prevented him from doing so. The second year came and went, and while the trees remained beautiful, nothing of note grew on their branches. Eventually, we forgot about them.*

## Rising Action: Introduce a change to come

*Example: During the third year, I noticed the trees were dry, so I watered them. At some point that same year, I noticed a green, fruit-like object growing on the trees. Over time, the fruit grew and eventually fell to the ground.*

## Turning Point: Introduce the tipping point

*Example: One day, I noticed my dogs eating the dropped fruit, and I sprinted out, fearful it might poison them. I picked up what they were eating and was surprised by what I saw.*

## Resolution: A funny or feel-good ending

*Example: I found out we had a small stand of Avocado Trees. The fruit they produced was so tasty that, to this day, I remember the flavor. We shared our fortune with others; my dogs had the shiniest coats ever.*

## Conclusion: Connect back to the purpose

*Example: What would have happened if I had not given them water or tried to protect my dogs? What would have happened if I did not act? The avocado trees turned into a gift and blessing from God. We had such an abundance that we joyfully shared, and they were blessed too.*

*Proverbs 3:9 instructs us to honor the Lord with our possessions and the first fruits of our labor. Giving to God is a way to show gratitude for all He has provided in our lives. And the Lord promises in verse 10 that our generosity will be rewarded with overflowing blessings. It's a wonderful concept that fills me with hope and joy.*

# Storytelling Example 2

## Setting: Introduce the time, place, and person

*A California man was seriously injured in an automotive accident that ended his career in carpentry. He lived on disability checks for years.*

## Conflict: Introduce the issue, concern, or problem

*When his disability checks ran out, his family's financial situation worsened, so he couldn't afford to support his children. As a result, they had to go live with their grandparents in Louisiana.*

## Rising Action: Introduce a change to come

*The situation worsened until he saw a Navajo Blanket on Antiques Roadshow that looked very similar to the one he had inherited from his late great-grandmother.*

## Turning Point: Introduce the tipping point

*After the show, he searched his home until he discovered the blanket in a dusty old box. He later auctioned it for \$1.5 million.*

## Resolution: A funny or feel-good ending

*He possessed a blanket worth a fortune through all the struggles and solutions to make ends meet. However, he needed to recognize its true value and utilize it to his advantage.*

## Conclusion: Connect back to the purpose

*Let's look at our scripture now, Malachi 3:10. "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing, That there will not be room enough to receive it."*

*By trusting God and taking action, we open ourselves to the abundance of blessings He provides. We must not keep these blessings hidden in a dusty old box but rather cherish and appreciate them. With continued faith and gratitude, we can continue to receive the blessings that come our way.*





## Storytelling Example 3

### **Setting: Introduce the time, place, and person**

*A man pursued his dream of becoming a farmer by purchasing 100 acres of land, all the necessary tools, and a new tractor. He also got himself a hat and a fresh pair of overalls.*

### **Conflict: Introduce the issue, concern, or problem**

*He said, "All right, I'm ready to go!" The next day he got up, had a nice breakfast, put his hat on, went outside, sat on the porch, and stared at his land all day.*

### **Rising Action: Introduce a change to come**

*The man repeated the same action the following day, the next day, and even the day after. This routine went on for weeks, leaving him perplexed and constantly searching the ground for any indication of progress, but there was none.*

### **Turning Point: Introduce the tipping point**

*According to natural laws, a seed must be planted for something to grow.*

### **Resolution: A funny or feel-good ending**

*Despite having all the necessary tools, looking like a farmer, and even claiming to be one, there can be no yield without planting the seed.*

### **Conclusion: Connect back to the purpose**

*In Mark, we see what Jesus says about the matter.*

*"And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."*

*Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a man who scatters seed. This means that to have a harvest, we need to sow the seed first. Similarly, in spiritual law, Jesus emphasized the importance of planting the seed of faith. The farmer who does this is confident and prepared to receive the harvest when it comes. We can expect a guaranteed harvest if we plant a seed for God's kingdom by returning our tithes and offerings. So, let's sow the seed today and look forward to a fruitful harvest in the future.*

# Starting Point

## Bible Verses to Inspire

The Bible provides helpful scriptures to make a meaningful offering call that connects members to God's transformative abundance and sacrificial love through acts of generosity.

*Here are a few to get you started:*



# Bible Verses

## Tithe is Holy

***Malachi 3:10***

Try me now this, If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

## Everything Belongs to God

***Leviticus 27:30-32***

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord. If a man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord.

## Give to God What is God's

***Mark 12:14-18***

When they had come, they said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?" But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at Him.

## Tithe to be a Blessing

***1 Timothy 6:17-19***

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

## The Cheerful Giver

***2 Corinthians 9:6-15***

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

## Give From the Heart

***Matthew 6:19-21***

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## More Blessed to Give than to Receive

***Acts 20:35***

I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

## Three Wise Men

***Matthew 2:9-11***

When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

## Honoring God

***Proverbs 3:9-10***

Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.

## Good Gifts

***Luke 6:38***

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

## God Gave His BEST

***John 3:16-17***

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.





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