



Helping Our Children Become Worshipful Givers by Melvin Amerson and James P. Amerson

Children and youth are typically given little attention in relation to worship through giving. The reasons range from, “They are only children,” to “They don’t have any money.” But children and youth are still members of the Body of Christ. Our children and youth are part of our church today, and they can lead us even more as they become the future spiritual leaders of tomorrow. There must be intentionality in integrating our younger members into worship and in creating worship through giving. This can be done in a way that helps children understand that giving is an act of worship. It is incumbent upon church leaders and parents to develop the next generation of generous supporters of the church. Otherwise young people will never connect faith and money, or money with worship.

A children’s message in worship is always appropriate and has the potential to impact the entire congregation. Parents and grandparents always pay close attention to what is being taught to their loved ones, so it becomes a teachable moment for the entire family. If the entire family hears the message together, it creates opportunities for further discussion. We would encourage the presentation of a children’s stewardship message at least once a quarter, just as we would recommend a quarterly stewardship sermon for the adults. The messages can be shared on the same day, using the same scriptural text, thus allowing the family to embrace the same message.

For churches that have separate children’s or youth church, there must be intentionality in celebrating the offering for their service. Having the same theme or message as the adult service develops continuity. Remember the verse, “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” (Proverbs 22:6) Further, children of today have financial resources that past generations did not possess, thus making this an opportune time to teach biblical stewardship and the celebration of the offering.

Today, many children and youth have their own money. They either have part-time jobs or receive an allowance from their parents. It is important for them to understand that everything belongs to God, and that they are to honor God with a tithe of all their allowance or earnings. Helping them to understand biblically that they are to give, irrespective of their age, is vitally important in developing the next generation of generous givers. Adults, children and youth must see you place more than a token dollar bill in the offertory plate weekly. If you support the church by making electronic contributions, consider placing something extra in the plate each week, so they will understand the difference between a tithe or proportionate gift, and an offering, which is over and above our regular giving.

Allow young believers to participate in the lifting of the offering by reading offering meditations and scripture as members present their tithes and offerings, not just on Children’s Sunday or Youth Sunday, but in the context of regular Sunday worship as well. This displays that they are participants in worship, but more importantly it helps them connect faith and money while celebrating the offering. Also, their peers see their witness through these readings.



Many of our children and youth are very creative. Let them speak to the whole church through their own creative approaches to offerings and stewardship. A brief biblically based skit not only lets them share their talent, but also conveys a contemporary message of God's generosity and our call to respond to that generosity. Challenge a child or a youth to write a poem as a response to a passage of scripture on generosity or a mission work experience and share it during the offertory. Allow them to occasionally give a children's message during service.

In many congregations, youth groups participate in local and global mission projects, building shelters, clinics, and school facilities to help those who are less fortunate financially and educationally. Such mission trips can be very helpful in developing generosity. When youth mission teams share their experience with the congregation, their testimony will touch the lives of other youth and adults. This experience connects grace, faith, money and works, which leads to celebration through giving.

Gen-Xer's and Millenials are very service oriented. They enjoy hands-on ministry, and take great joy and pride in making a difference. This generation gives time and money to projects or institutions they deem are transforming lives and quality of life. Max Mertz, Director of the Wesley Foundation at Texas A&M University, contends Gen-Xer's and Millenials are motivated in their giving when they see *real needs*, and are able to see tangible results. Further, he strongly feels mission projects motivate and inspire giving in groups. A strong, compelling vision of life-changing, community-transforming ministries really touches the hearts of this group of believers, which causes them to give.

Celebrating the offering is for all believers. It is important for church leaders to recognize giving paradigm shifts among children and youth of today. Each generation looks at church support differently, so presenting the message of biblical scriptures along with missional work touches the hearts of these young believers. Give them opportunities to share their stories of faith and works with the congregation, as they honor God with their gifts, but also with their passion for transforming lives and communities. Knowing they are making a difference in the world motivates them to celebrate the offering and worship through giving.

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