Elevator Pitch Your Offerings

How to Make the Best 60 Seconds in Church Count Every Week

Introduction

The single most important thing you can do to increase giving at your church is to learn how to elevator pitch your offerings. You doubt that? Here is what one pastor wrote me after his church put this approach to work.

> ***"Giving at our church can be summed up with one word: phenomenal! Giving is up 30%+ this year. We connect the dots every week, often using your 'Elevator Pitch' from the weekly Stewardship Coach newsletter. This has been life changing for our church as we no longer scrape around for money every week." — Brian Hughes, Sr. Pastor, PCC, Powhatan, VA***

You might not increase your giving by 30%, but you too can increase your giving IF you change how you handle the offering. Now that I have your attention, let's start by discussing what an elevator pitch is.

The elevator pitch comes from the idea that you are riding in an elevator when a big-shot company executive steps in. You have maybe thirty seconds of time with him or her. What you say in those thirty seconds will mean the difference between getting a full hearing later and simply being forgotten. The idea is to compress the key information about you into a thirty-second burst of energy that will "sell" your idea.

So, pretending I am on the elevator with you, I might say, "Pastor Smith, you might have heard that giving to churches is off. In fact, your church might be experiencing a decline in giving. When giving declines, ministry initiatives are threatened and lives are impacted. Yet the churches we partner with have seen their giving go UP. We work with good churches and make them better, and I would love to talk to you about how we can increase your giving." That is far better than simply, "Hi, my name is Mark and I would really like to talk to you about my company."

Elevator Pitch Your Offerings

Years ago I read a book called The Influential Fundraiser, in which the authors talked about the elevator pitch: that short statement you can make in less than one minute. They stated that every elevator pitch needs three elements, think, feel, and do. Here is how those three elements relate to the offering.

- **Think.** You want to get them thinking about the offering and why it matters.
- **Feel.** You want to touch their heart as to why the offering is important.
- **Do.** When it comes to the offering, you want them to reach into their pockets and give!

The book teaches that you prepare your elevator pitch in reverse order, starting with the action you want your words to produce. In the case of the offering, you want their gift. Next, you imagine the emotion that will likely move people to give. Finally, you select and shape the information that will create that emotion and thus their response.

My point is that you need an elevator pitch as well. If you think about it, every Sunday you have an elevator moment, and we call it the offering. Most pastors say something at that point in the service. Some explain away how people are not required to give because we don't want to offend the guests, some almost beg for money, and some use guilt or some other tactic.

When your elevator moment arrives, what will you say? What you say could make the difference between making budget this year or laying off staff members and canceling ministry. Make the offering time a thought-out part of the service, much the same as the sermon and other aspects of worship. Spend time weekly thinking about new and creative ways to elevator pitch your offering times, and I think you will find your offering plates will be fuller. Helping you accomplish that is the goal of this manual, and we start with what I call Offering Basics.

Offering Basics

“Just as we get going in worship, we have to stop and take up the offering!” Seriously, that was the comment a staff member once made when asked about the offering time at their church. It might not surprise you that, with that attitude, giving had declined the year before at this church. That attitude permeates the Church today. To increase giving and givers, we must recognize that the offering IS worship!

If you are a pastor, how much time did you spend this week preparing your message? When I was in seminary, we had a preaching professor who said that for every minute you preach, you should spend one hour in preparation. While I know few pastors who put in that amount of time, we all prepare and pray over our message because it is so important. So let me ask you: how much time and preparation have you put into this weekend's offering? Here are ten thoughts about how to make your offerings inspiring and more impactful.

- **Elevate the importance of the offering.** Start with yourself and then the entire staff. Work to change the attitude that the offering is an inconvenience, and see it as an act of worship.
- **Don't be afraid to ask people to give.** Never apologize for the offering. The offering is a time of worship, and we never apologize for letting people worship.
- **Plan out every offering.** Plan it just like you plan out every message. Spend time every week thinking through how to best present the offering.
- **Change the format and positioning regularly.** Every once in a while, do something different to break the routine. Predictability is the enemy of attention.
- **Always give a stewardship or generosity message before the offering.** Craft one-minute messages that underscore the importance of giving. Use the time the ushers come forward to make a case for the offering.
- **Utilize testimonies.** Laypeople expect you to tell them to give. When one of their peers talks about giving, they listen.
- **Use creative tools.** Video and skits can make the offering fun. There is a host of material out there, so use it and be creative!
- **Always be positive.** Guilt never works, so don't try to guilt people into giving.
- **Cast a compelling reason to give.** People give to that which makes a difference. Tell them how their gift matters, and they will give.

- **Report and thank.** Regularly tell people what their gifts have accomplished and thank them for their gifts. Link the offering to the ministries the church is doing, because people give to success and people like to be thanked. Never take your donors for granted.

I believe that if you incorporate these ten steps, your offerings will dramatically pick up. Work and plan to make your offerings anything but boring!

Seven Reasons Not Passing the Plate Doesn't Make Sense

A trend among some churches is to NOT take up an offering at all. In my experience, churches that stop passing a plate, bucket, basket, or some other means of collecting money take in noticeably less than churches of the same size that do. So if you think the offering time is a waste of time or is offensive, be prepared to watch your giving shrink.

Why then do some churches shy away from taking up the offering or do away with it altogether? The typical response is that people are turned off by churches talking about money. “We canvassed our community before we started our church and found that one of the biggest reasons people avoid church is they think all we talk about is money.” In effect, they are allowing non-churched people to dictate the practices of the church. Here is why I think not taking up an offering is wrong.

- **Jesus never worried about gaining a crowd.** He talked about money and possessions more than almost any other subject. Read Jesus' encounter with the Rich Young Ruler: when the young man walked away sad at Jesus' bold claim about his money, Jesus let him go. Shouldn't we attempt to be more like Jesus?
- **Offerings run throughout Scripture.** The words “offering” and “offerings” appear hundreds of times across both the Old and New Testaments. If we are not talking about offerings, we are essentially cutting out a large portion of the Bible.
- **The offering IS worship.** Why would we forbid or make it hard for people to worship God through their tithes and offerings? You don't tell people before your service that they don't HAVE to sing; you just start singing and invite them to join you. How is that any different from asking people to join you in the worshipful act of giving?
- **Churches rarely talk about money.** I once had a church member tell me that his pastor talked too much about money. I knew that in the last year the pastor had preached only once on money. One sermon a year was one too many for those who truly are not disciples.
- **Nobody complains when nonprofits talk about money.** That is because nonprofits always make a case for the appeal. People react to church appeals not because we ask for money, but because of how we ask. Instead of changing our methods, we need to change our message.
- **Your church is changing the world for good.** As such, it is worth funding. Thank God for the Red Cross, but your mission is more important than theirs, because we are literally about saving the world.
- **You can't afford the loss.** Churches that don't pass the plate are costing themselves operating money that funds missions and ministry.

Keep passing the plate, or whatever you use!

Why the Offering Moment Matters

Most pastors never give the offering thirty seconds of thought. There are books on stewardship campaigns, capital giving, and financial discipleship. But the offering moment itself, that specific window of sixty seconds that occurs every week in every church across America, has been almost completely ignored.

Before we get to the mechanics of how to build and deliver an offering talk, we need something more foundational: why the offering moment matters in the first place. Until you understand that, you will keep treating it as an interruption. And an offering treated as an interruption will always perform like one.

What You Are Currently Teaching

Let me tell you what I hear in church after church across America. I call it The Apology. Someone steps to the microphone, sometimes the pastor, sometimes an associate, sometimes whoever was available that morning, and says something like this: “At this time, we're going to receive our tithes and offerings. For our guests, please don't feel like you need to participate. This time is for our members.”

Plates are passed. Music plays. The moment ends. I have sat in the back of churches and watched ushers move through the room like they were collecting trash after a ballgame, with no story, no vision, and no invitation. That single sixty-second moment tells me more about a church's financial future than any budget report ever could.

Here is what that offering just taught everyone in the room. It taught members, including any child present, that giving is something for insiders only, a private institutional transaction rather than an act of worship anyone can join. It taught guests that giving is optional and probably not that important. And it taught everyone that leadership is not particularly excited about it either. When you minimize the offering moment, you communicate three dangerous things every single week:

- **Giving is optional.**
- **Generosity is awkward.**
- **The mission is not worth sacrificing for.**

Every week you take up an offering, you are teaching your people something about giving. The question is not whether you are teaching. The question is what you are teaching.

The Offering Is Worship

> ***The offering is not an interruption of worship. The offering IS worship.***

Scripture is unambiguous about this. When Paul writes to the Corinthians about the collection for the Jerusalem believers, he does not frame it as a fundraising event. He frames it as grace, an expression of the same generous spirit that moved Christ to give Himself for us. When the Macedonian churches gave out of their extreme poverty, it was not a transaction but an act of overflowing joy and surrender to God. And when the widow gave her two small coins, Jesus did not say she had made a donation; He said she had given everything.

Giving is one of the most tangible expressions of faith a believer can make. It declares, in concrete terms, that God is Lord over every resource I have. It declares that the mission of His church matters more than my comfort, and that I trust Him to provide what I need, so I am free to give generously from what I have. That is worship, and that is discipleship.

When you treat the offering as a logistical pause between worship songs, you are not protecting your congregation from an awkward moment. You are robbing them of one of the most powerful acts of worship available to them. And you are doing it every week.

Fifty-Two Teaching Moments a Year

If you question the impact of sixty seconds, how many McDonald's jingles are stuck in your brain from decades of listening to brief messages? Ask McDonald's if sixty seconds once a week for 52 weeks would be worth their time planning, and I think you know the answer. Most pastors preach one stewardship sermon a year, maybe two. They assume those messages carry the weight of their congregation's entire giving formation, and they miss 52 other opportunities every year.

The offering moment, taken seriously and prepared intentionally, is the most consistent giving-formation tool available to any pastor. It is more consistent than a stewardship series because it happens every week. It is more personal than a direct mail letter because it happens in the room, in the community, in the presence of God. And it is more powerful than an end-of-year appeal because it builds week after week into a culture. Pastors are trained to exegete Scripture, but nobody teaches them to exegete the offering. That is what the rest of this manual is for.

The Heart, the Head, the Hand, and the Feet

I once wrote a series of blog posts called “The Anatomy of the Offering.” Understanding the anatomy of an offering gives you the complete framework for what to say.

- **The Heart of the Offering is the story.** Every ask needs a driver, a story of vision, life change, or mission that moves a person from passive attendance to active participation. When you ask with heart, people give, not because they feel guilty or because the budget is behind, but because they want to be part of something that matters. Get a story, work your story, tell your story, and people will give to support that story.
- **The Head of the Offering is the teaching.** Heart alone produces first-time gifts. To develop long-term donors, you must connect both heart and head. As a rule of thumb, 20% to 30% of your offering talks should teach directly from Scripture what the Bible says about giving, generosity, and stewardship, so your congregation understands why giving matters theologically, not just practically.
- **The Hand of the Offering is the ask.** This is the moment you invite people to give, and it is where most offerings go wrong. Most pastors either skip it entirely, apologize for it, or make it so vague that nobody knows what they are being asked to do. The hand should be clear, direct, and confident, because you are not begging; you are extending an invitation to worship.
- **The Feet of the Offering are the how.** Remind people of the multiple ways they can make their gift: plate, text, app, or online. It is easier than ever to give instantly with today's technology, so make sure your people know that.

The best offering talks move through all four, heart, head, hand, and feet, in sixty seconds. That is the target. It sounds impossible until you learn how.

The Best 60 Seconds in Church

The offering moment is The Best 60 Seconds in church life, not because it is easy but because it matters. Sixty seconds done well and consistently will do more to shape a giving culture over time than any campaign you could run. The churches that take the offering moment seriously produce giving cultures. The churches that treat it as a formality produce, at best, mediocre giving.

Here is the standard: never spend less time preparing the offering than you spend preparing the announcements. If you can outline a bulletin and build a slide deck for the announcements, you can prepare sixty seconds of intentional, vision-driven, story-based invitation to give. Hurry is the death of anything. The offering is too important to rush, too sacred to improvise, and too consequential to treat as an afterthought.

What a Good Offering Sounds Like

Compare The Apology above with this. A pastor steps to the microphone during the offering and looks out at the congregation, not at his notes and not at the floor. He says:

> ***"Last Tuesday, a woman named Sandra walked into our food pantry. She had three kids, no job, and two days' worth of food in her apartment. Because of your generosity, she left with enough groceries for two weeks. She also met one of our volunteers, who invited her to our Tuesday night community group. She's coming back this week. Your gift to this church this morning is not a budget line. It is Sandra's next step. It is her kids' next meal. It is the next conversation that might change her life forever. Give generously today — because that is what your giving is doing. Remember, we have multiple easy ways you can give here. The bulletin and screens have all that information. Let's pray."***

That is sixty seconds. It has a story, it connects the dollar to the impact, it makes a clear and confident ask, and it treats the offering as the act of worship it is. Nobody in that room is thinking about the interruption to the worship flow. They are thinking about Sandra, and they are reaching for their phone to give.

How to Build and Deliver an Offering Talk

I stopped counting at 500 offering talks. I have written them for churches of every size, every denomination, and every context. I have coached pastors through them, critiqued them after the fact, and watched what happens when they are done well versus when they are done poorly.

Here is the foundational conviction that drives everything that follows: the offering is worship, not an interruption of worship. Because of that, I do not work on shortening offering talks; I work on making them effective. The offering is too important to rush.

Start with the Framework

Every effective offering talk follows the same four-part anatomy. Get all four in place and your offering will consistently produce more giving, more engagement, and more disciples who understand what generosity actually is.

- **The Heart: the story.** Get their attention immediately with something timely, then move to the story. Show what the church is doing and how it makes a difference, and help them make the connection that a gift given in today's offering will impact the Kingdom.
- **The Head: the theology.** Roughly 20% to 30% of your offering talks should teach directly from Scripture. Never assume people will magically understand generosity. Teach it so they will live it.
- **The Hand: the ask.** You want your hands open and extended, inviting people to worship through giving. To accomplish this, use the 2 Sentence Out described below.
- **The Feet: the how.** Show them how easy it is to give: the plate, text, app, or online. End with something like, "We have multiple easy ways you can give here. The bulletin and screens have all that information. Let's pray."

The 2 Sentence Out

This is the most practical tool I give to every church I work with. After you have told the story and touched the heart, you reach the moment of transition, the pivot from story to ask. Most pastors stumble here; they trail off, they over-explain, or they apologize. The 2 Sentence Out removes all of that uncertainty. You have told a story, and now you close the loop and make the ask in exactly two sentences:

> ***"Every time you give here, you help support stories and lives just like the one I just shared. This morning, we invite you to join us in worship as we give of our tithes and offerings."***

Clean. Confident. No apology and no trailing off. The story did the emotional work, and the 2 Sentence Out closes the door and opens the plate. Here are two more variations to rotate through so the close never goes stale:

- "Your generosity is what makes moments like this possible every single week. As we receive the offering, we invite you to give in whatever way is most convenient for you."
- "Behind every gift given here is a story being written in someone's life. Today, your gift continues that story. Let's give together."

Extending the hand and making the ask is the key to gaining a response. Practice the 2 Sentence Out until it is second nature.

Keys to Writing a Strong Offering Talk

- **Never use guilt.** Guilt does not produce long-term, cheerful givers. It produces compliance and resentment, and you want disciples who give from joy and conviction.
- **Thank them early and often.** Assume they are going to give and thank them for it before the plates are even passed.

- **Change how you say what you say.** Rotate your approach: a story one week, a Scripture the next, a brief interview or sixty-second video the week after. A congregation that knows exactly what to expect has stopped listening.
- **Use Scripture consistently.** Weave biblical teaching on generosity throughout the year, not just during the stewardship series.
- **Give it sixty seconds.** The offering deserves at least that. We give time to what we deem important.

Plan It Every Week

The offering talk that gets prepared will always outperform the one that gets improvised. Spend fifteen to thirty minutes every week planning the next offering moment before Sunday arrives. Know what story you will tell, whether this is a heart week or a head week, and your 2 Sentence Out, and have it ready.

One more metric to keep your eye on: what percentage of your giving comes through recurring giving? The offering moment is the best weekly opportunity to encourage members to move from one-time giving to automatic giving. January and May are the prime months for a dedicated recurring giving push.

The Power of Prayer

Here is my final word on the offering moment, and it is the most important one. The best offering times are those born of prayer. If you want the offering to be a more worshipful experience, it starts before you ever step to the microphone.

> ***The Best 60 Seconds in Church begins on your knees.***

Apply these principles consistently, and you will see giving increase. Not because you found a better technique, but because you finally started treating the offering moment with the weight it deserves. For a fuller picture of building a generous church, see my book, The Fully Funded Church Is Not an Accident.

Sample Elevator Pitches

Here are three samples, each broken down by Heart, Head, Hand, and Feet, so you can see the anatomy at work.

No Reserves, No Retreats, No Regrets (Heart-Driven, with a 2 Sentence Out)

Does anyone here remember Borden's ice cream? How about their mascot, Elsie the cow? Borden's milk, ice cream, and other products were a household word in the last century. Yet what you might not know is the story of William Borden, the heir of that multimillion-dollar company.

In 1904, upon graduating from high school, William Borden was sent on an around-the-world trip as a graduation gift from his parents. He was so gripped by the needs he saw that he wrote home, “I'm going to give my life to prepare for the mission field.” In response to a friend's surprise, Bill wrote two words on the back of his Bible: “No reserves.”

As a student at Yale, he wrote, “Say no to self and yes to Jesus every time.” He started weekly Bible studies, and by his senior year, 1,300 Yale students were meeting in such groups. Upon graduation, he

turned down high-paying jobs and gave no thought to the millions his family was worth. In his Bible he wrote two more words: “No retreats.”

He sailed for China by way of Egypt to study Arabic. There he contracted spinal meningitis, and within a month, 25-year-old William Borden was dead. Before he died, he wrote two final words in his Bible: “No regrets.”

(HAND/FEET, 2 Sentence Out) You might not be called to be a missionary, but every time you give here, you help support the mission work we do around the world. This morning, we invite you to join us in worship as we give of our tithes and offerings, by plate, app, or text, whatever is easiest for you.

Three Reasons Why (Head-Driven, with a 2 Sentence Out)

Why? Have you ever heard that from one of your kids when you tell them they can't do something they want to do? We naturally want to know why.

(HEAD) This morning, let me give you three reasons we take up an offering every week. First, we give out of obedience; Paul told the church in Corinth to set aside a sum of money each week in keeping with their income. Second, we give as worship; we don't stop worshipping to collect the offering, we continue worship. Third, we give because what we do as a church matters and is worthy of your support.

(HAND/FEET, 2 Sentence Out) Your generosity is what makes moments like this possible every single week. As we receive the offering, we invite you to give in whatever way is most convenient for you.

Fill the Tank! (Heart-Driven, Everyday Illustration)

Can you believe it's summer? How many of you have a road trip planned? Would you leave the house on an empty tank? Of course not; you plan ahead and fill up before you leave.

You might not realize it, but here at [YOUR CHURCH NAME] we need fuel too. We have mission trips, summer camps, and VBS planned this summer, and we depend on the generosity of people like you to keep our tank full.

(HAND/FEET, 2 Sentence Out) Behind every gift given here is a story being written in someone's life. Today, your gift continues that story, so let's give together, in whatever way is easiest for you, plate or online.

Bottom Line: Every week you get sixty seconds on the elevator. Plan them, pray over them, and make them count.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, has spent decades helping churches of every size build a culture of generosity, from congregations with $100,000 budgets to some of the largest churches in America. He is the author of The Fully Funded Church Is Not an Accident, and he coaches pastors and church leaders on capital campaigns, seasonal giving, and year-round stewardship. To bring Mark's coaching to your church, contact him at mark@markwbrooks.com.