



Myths about Giving

Five debilitating myths can keep a pastor from effectively calling people to give.

- 1. People don't want to give.** We found that most people in our church were not pleased with their giving—they wanted to give more, but they feel they have too many bills and need practical help. That means we need to teach everything from plastic surgery (cut up the credit cards) to appendectomies (remove unnecessary expenses), so people can get their financial lives in order.
- 2. If we help people, they will generously give back to the church.** A brokenhearted pastor once shared with me, "I've poured out my life for these people. I can't understand why they don't give to the ministry."
I responded, "Which children tend to be the most helpful to their parents? Those who have been spoiled rotten or those who have been taught sacrifice and discipline?"
I have discovered the people who give the most complain the least, while those who give the least complain the most. People become more loyal and faithful when they are asked to give and serve. Unless we teach biblical giving, people become increasingly self-centered.
- 3. When the economy is down, we can't expect people to give.** When our church was considering embarking on a multimillion-dollar building program, our economy was in a downhill slide with high unemployment. Many members warned we should hold off until the economy changed. Most were employed, though, committed to their church, and willing to sacrifice. So we went ahead with the project.
After completing the building, we were debt-free in less than three years—even though family incomes in our area are below the state average. If we expect nothing, people live down to our expectations.
- 4. All we need to do is teach the Bible and pray.** I once sat in a performance review with a dedicated leader whose ministry had financial problems. When asked about that, he said if we accurately teach the Bible and pray, God will always supply our financial needs so he had no strategy to encourage giving. Prayer is important, but many times "God's way" of providing involves work and planning.
- 5. If we urge people to give, they'll get angry.** When I first proposed a giving strategy for our church, a key leader was tenaciously opposed. "If we pressure people to give, they'll get irritated and offerings will go down," he said.
"You're right," I responded. "That's why we will teach biblical giving with the same boldness and lack of pressure that we teach prayer and purity."
A few people complained, just as they do when we talk about other areas of discipleship, the majority responded positively, and offerings increased more than 20 percent.