

The Studio

EPISODE // PASSING THE OFFERING PLATES

Scripture teaches us to give tithes & offerings unto the Lord. We're taught to give with a generous & unselfish heart--& that, through our giving, we help further the Kingdom & will be blessed in eternity with Christ. As a small child, I remember getting so excited when my parents would give me a few coins to place in the offering plate. As I grew older, my parents always encouraged me to give a portion of my allowance to the church. My parents always reminded me to be a cheerful giver. My pastor always reminds my church that we are called to generosity. As I'm learning about tithes and offerings, I'm learning though it may be considered an earthly sacrifice to give resources to the church, it's ultimately an investment in heaven.

As worship leaders, we help set the tone for the offertory. The offertory is the churchy word for the time when tithes & offerings are received in worship. Your church might prefer to call it a time of giving, or something a little more informal than offertory. In your song selection, this is a great time to select a piece that your congregation can meditate & pray on as they give their offerings.

Congregations receive their offerings in a number of ways today. Some larger, or "mega", churches have elected to invite worshippers bring their offerings forward to the table during communion or a time of prayer. Others have stations set up in the back for worshippers to give offerings on their way in or out of the worship gathering. And some churches encourage online giving. There are many variations on how to take up offerings, so I'll focus on a classic form: "Ushers in the Aisles."

If you enlist ushers to help pass the plate down the aisle, you'll want to think about these things:

- ✦ **Who will you designate as your ushers?** A great practice is recruiting church members from multiple generations as ushers. It serves as a reminder that everyone can give, no matter your age. It also empowers intergenerational leadership within the church.
- ✦ **Establish a signal for your ushers to come forward.** Maybe you call them in your prayer, maybe you have the preacher call them forward, maybe you tell the ushers to come up when a particular song starts...however you choose, it's good to have a clear signal for your ushers of when to come forward.
- ✦ **Be sure the ushers know how to pass the plates down the aisles.** This seems like a given, but passing the offering plates is a system that you have to learn. Having a logistics meeting before the service with the ushers ensures a smooth process during the service. Remember, you don't want the passing of the offering plates to disrupt the atmosphere of worship you've helped established in the service. Come up with a system that makes it easy for all to retrieve the plate.
- ✦ **Have a designated spot for the ushers to place the offering plates.** Most churches have the plates put at the Lord's Table; some have table in the back. In the end, just make sure the plates end up where they to be, in a safe and secure location. You want to be sure that the gifts your congregation has prayerfully & generously given to the church are well taken care of.

And there you have it. These are just a few pieces of advice to help aide you as you think about taking up an offering within your congregation.