



*For God Love's a cheerful Giver. 2 Cor. 9:7 (NIRV)*

## Teaching Our Children about Tithes and Offerings

Getting children to bring money to church is not the same as teaching them to give.

The goal is not to bring in money; the goal is to teach children to be givers.

We recognize that everything we have came from God. The Bible teaches us that we can give God our best by giving Him our Tithe - one tenth of the money we earn or receive- with a cheerful attitude (2 Corinthians 9:7). God also asked us to give beyond our tithe, which we call an "offering", to help those in need.

We want to encourage our children to give a tithe and offering because it's an important part of obeying God, no matter how little our tithe actually is. It's much easier to build this habit at an early age, than try to squeeze it in as an adult.

### Learning About Giving from the Bible

2 Corinthians 9 - Paul instructed the Corinthian church on the matter of a collection that would go to support the believers in Jerusalem. His instructions help us understand how God views giving and generosity.

Genesis 4 - Cain and Abel each gave God a gift....But who gave his best to God?

Malachi 3:8-10 - God promises us a blessing if we are obedient in giving tithes and offerings.

Mark 12:41-44 - The story of the poor widow who put all she owned into the treasury. Jesus makes it clear that it's not about how much we give, it's about our attitude.

Teaching children to tithe is an important part of their faith education that we often overlook. Giving to God is a core value of our faith that should be taught early and reinforced often.

The most common way that I see tithing taught to children is simple by giving our children a quarter to put in the offering plate. This is fine for very young children because it gives them an opportunity to participate. For our elementary school children it may send the wrong message. First, the money wasn't theirs to begin with, so they do not feel the satisfaction of it being a personal gift to God. Second, it does not teach consistency in giving or the idea of putting God first in our tithes and offerings.

We want to teach children to be intentional about their giving. But our adult understanding of tithing can be too complex for children. For example, children are not generally taught to figure percentages until their middle-elementary-school years. So teaching younger children to calculate a percentage tithe is not age appropriate.

## **Teaching Children to Give**

Children's Pastor, Leslie Bienza, tells of a story about two boys. One boy invites his friend Johnny to come to church with him. Johnny's mom gives him two quarters. Johnny is so excited, because he normally does not have any money and he starts to dream of all the ways he might spend his money. (Johnny comes from a poor family).

When they get to the his friend's church, the offering is called and all the children bring up their offering, some bring \$20.00, \$10.00, some \$30.00 or more, and the teacher and everyone praises all the children for bringing their large amounts of money. When it's time for Johnny to bring his money up to the offering plate, he contemplates what to do; he has never had this much money before. Should he keep it or put it in the offering? He decides that it would be best to give it to the church. When he takes his quarters up and places them in the offering plate, no one celebrates his tithe, no one claps, no one cheers like they did for the other children. No one said anything about Johnny's gift....that is, no one except Jesus. For Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, this child put in more than all the children to the treasure, for they all put in out of their surplus, but he, out of his poverty, put in all he owned, all he had to live on. (From the story in the Bible of the poor widow - Mark 12:31-44).

Tragically, this is an all too common scenario. Who will bring in the most offering....the girls or the boys? Who will raise enough money this year for the children's pastor to die his/her hair blue? Who will give the most in their mission jars? Who will get the prize? Unfortunately, we never stop to remember that God does not count money the same way we do. Two cents given from a generous and thankful heart is much, much more than \$10,000.00 given out of someone's surplus (money they could easily live without). If we are interested in teaching children to be givers, there are some basic principles we need to consider.

## **What Not To Do**

1. We don't want to miss the point of what we are teaching. Getting children to bring money to church is not the same as teaching them to give. Our goal is not to bring in money; our goal is to teach children to be givers.
2. We should not bribe. In an attempt to teach children to be givers, many people unintentionally teach children to be buyers. Without balance and proper teaching, rewards for giving can reduce generosity to an exchange of goods and services.

## What We Need to Do

1. Lead by example. Are we givers? Do we share? Are we generous with our time and our material possessions? If we see someone in need, do we do anything about that? How often do we share?
2. Teach about giving regularly. Teach about tithes and offerings. Talk about giving to others. Teach lots of scripture about giving (Proverbs 14:21, 19:17, 21:13, 22:9).
3. Be patient. Do not get frustrated if it does not work right away. Our children are growing up in a selfish world. It takes time to learn to give freely.
4. Regularly give opportunities for children to give:
  - a. Put it in their world. Children enjoy giving to other children because they understand their situations better.
  - b. Appeal to children's naturally sensitive nature. Though they are selfish at times, children are sensitive when a genuine need and hurt that they understand is happening. Have them imagine in detail what it would be like to live in the hurting child's situation.
  - c. Make sure the children are doing the giving. We are not teaching them anything by having them give someone else's money. Giving requires sacrifice. Expect the children to be the ones to sacrifice.
  - d. Make sure the giving is the child's choice. Giving is not giving if it is done under compulsion, (2 Corinthians 9:7).
  - e. Be creative. Children can give more than money. They can give clothes, toys, and services as well as many other things.
5. Let the satisfaction of seeing someone else being blessed be the reward. Children will feel good when they see the happiness of the recipient of their gift. Let that be its own reward.
6. Always give affirmation after a job well done. Just as God affirms us, we can affirm children when they have done well.

## Some Ideas

These are just a few group ideas, but the possibilities are endless:

1. Sponsor a needy child as a group.
2. As a group, support a missionary who ministers to children.
3. Have kids clean up an elderly person's yard or plant flowers for them.
4. Find opportunities for community service.
5. Make a big card or craft to say thank you to a church staff member.
6. Respond when you hear of a family with children that are in a crisis (an accident, etc.).
7. At Christmas, have children pick out one of their toys that they really like and is in good condition and give it to a needy child in your community.
8. Allow the children to participate in church mission projects (Food Drive, Turkey Drop, PB&J Drive, School Supply Drive, etc.).

To sum it up, keep focused on the heart behind the giving, not the gift itself. We must teach children to live by the true love that Christ shows toward us.

**At Gateway in our Early Childhood, Kid's Town 2&4  
We are teaching our children about Tithes and Offerings.**

At the end of the service each week, the children have the opportunity to give their Tithe and Offering. The children are invited to give their offering and learn that the offering is a time for them to give a little bit back to God and tell Him "Thank You" for everything He gives them.

We don't want to miss the point:

Getting children to bring money to church is not the same as teaching them to give. The goal is not to bring in money; the goal is to teach children to be givers. We do not want to make a child feel uncomfortable for not bringing an offering.

They are welcome to bring their Tithe and Offering and place it in the offering "baskets" that we have. We tell them, thank you. We tell them....because God gives us everything we have, this is our way to give back and tell Him thank you for all those things. We say that the money they give to the church helps to tell others about Jesus. We also, encourage them to share something from their heart. Example: Place your hand on your heart and say (like a prayer) today I will share my toys with a friend, I will be kind and help a friend at school, I will be nice to my brother or sister, so forth and so on. Then they would touch their hand to the basket that is being passed around, as an offering.

**Other ways we teach our children to give and share throughout the year through "Missions".**

Church Wide Food Drive...

In November we will send out information about our church-wide food drive inviting the children to bring in food items to help support two of the Food Banks. This year our Food Drive is scheduled for November 15 and 22. On one Sunday we will collect for Lighthouse Christian Ministries and on the other we will collect for Clear Lake Food Pantry at Clear Lake Baptist.

Also, another way families can get involved in giving to others is through the Annual Turkey Drop. Gateway is privileged to participate in COA's (Christian Outreach Alliance) Annual Turkey Drop! Our church, along with 4 other churches, will be providing 25 turkeys with roasting pans! This year each church is also providing the following additional items: stuffing (CL Baptist), cranberry sauce (CL Church of Christ), yams (Gateway), and green beans (CLPC and CLUMC). How exciting to provide a struggling family with a Thanksgiving dinner!

We collect Peanut Butter and Jelly, which goes to the Light House Missions...

Lighthouse Christian Ministries (LCM) is a non-denominational Christian Outreach mission dedicated to assisting our neighbors in need. LCM provides emergency financial assistance and food for short term help. They are dedicated to serving each individual with respect and love, through Christ.

#### Collecting Children's Books...

During the months of March and April, as a mission project in, Gateway Early Childhood, we will be collecting children's books to give to the "Christian Hands" food bank in Pearland. The Lions Club has set up a library for the children. When the children come in with their parents to get food they are welcomed and encouraged to take home a book to read and keep. Most children that come into the food bank do not have books of their own. This has been a very successful project and they are always in need of children's books.

#### Summer Kid's Club...

Every Summer SKC has a mission project where we support the children in Kenya.

#### "Back to School Supply Drive"...

We also, want encourage and invite children to support the Back to School Drive, by bringing in school supplies that are needed in our school systems here in Clear Lake.

Teaching Children about giving from their heart, teaches them about God's love for them and for others. We give to God because we love God and he gave us so much more.

**A thought:** One approach to helping a child save is by using "Money Jars". You give your child three jars. You can label them "Money for God," "Money to Save," "Money to Spend". This could be a way to teach them to be intentional about how to use their money. If, you give your children two dollars for chores, gift money etc.; give it to them in quarters. Then divide the money in to the different jars...