

OFFERING TALKS: 60 SECOND DISCIPLESHIP CONVERSATIONS

By Todd McMichen



I want to help with specific training on the what, why, and how of Offering Talks as a great starting place for strategically growing generous disciples.

WHAT ARE THEY?

For the purpose of this ebook an offering talk is a 60 second conversation that occurs right before the offering moment. These offering talks can occur in small groups, volunteer events, leadership meetings, or large ministry department gatherings as well. Of course, they can extend beyond 60 seconds including images, videos, and testimonies. All staff members need to be trained in offering talks because every age group and meeting can become a moment that a church staff member is standing before a person who is a highly invested donor or desiring to become highly invested. Offering talks can serve as onramps, build culture, grow disciples, and release new levels of generosity.

WHY ARE THEY NEEDED?

Every church has a culture. A culture is what people feel when they experience any type of event. People can even experience your culture via your social media, website, interactions with a member in the community, or a visit to your office during the week. It is extremely important to name four to six non negotiable aspects of your culture that gain focused attention. You want to make sure you are in charge of your culture otherwise you will exude an insiders mentality or be quite surprised by how a guest would define their experience.

Over the past ten years it has become more popular to discuss the term a Generous Culture. I have heard churches clearly declare they are way off the mark on this desire while others can boast, rightly or wrongly, about possessing one. It would be very difficult to claim a

generous culture without first naming it. We never want to paint the proverbial target after shooting the arrow.

Crafting a personal Generosity Theology or describing the attributes of a Generous Disciple is a necessary starting point before strategically growing a Generous Culture. **Offering Talks then become an easy first step to increase engagement and discipleship, the two leading indicators of personal giving.**

For instance, studies show that modern people do not necessarily equate the word “tithe” with 10% of income. They actually believe it is equal to any size donation. So if you are leading with the word “tithe” assuming everyone understands it means 10% would be a misstep in discipleship. Additionally, if tithing is the goal, which I have heard stated as a standard for staff, leadership, and members for decades, in reality this produces the following: (1) Guilt on those who aren’t tithing and can’t see how it is even feasible, (2) A low expectation for those who have been tithing for years, but never progressed, (3) A possible short infusion of giving that lasts no more than 90 days. None of these items would equate to a healthy Generous Culture.

So I would strongly encourage church leaders to do the following if the desire is to see a congregation filled with generous disciples fueling kingdom vision.

- (1) **Craft a Generosity Theology** - four to six key principles that become known culture
- Or,
- (2) **Describe the attributes of a Generous Disciple** - Eight to twelve aspects that become focus points for teaching.

Then, use these words in a variety of communications during the year in staff meetings, leadership training opportunities, sermon content, and offering talks. Teach, train, and expect your staff to do the same thing.

WHAT ARE SOME TOPICS?

Honestly, the list of topics is nearly endless. You should have no problem naming a variety of focal points that are both inspiring and informing. Let me provide you with a list of ideas as well as some filters to think through. More is not your friend, but gathering a few points of focus will help your culture take root.

So let me return to a couple of previously mentioned topics.

(1) Generosity Theology

By way of example, here are some items to help you move past the limitations previously mentioned with the word tithing, which is obviously a biblical principle but should not be either a starting or ending point.

- Is God a generous God? If so, name the many ways he expresses generosity toward us.
- If we are made in the image of a generous God, what are the implications on personal generosity?
- Did you know that prayer, fasting, and giving are linked together in scripture? See Isaiah 58 and Matthew 6. Would you want to make this a critical component?
- What do words like faith, fear, risk, reward, sacrifice, or invest communicate? Pick words that are easy to access and continually inspire. The law, obligation, or duty will not be a long term friend.
- How could you craft a **Generosity Theology** that served every type of giver from the beginner to the most experienced?
- To keep the list from being twenty points long ask yourself, what are the top four to six principles that if someone gets them they will never stop growing?

(2) Generous Disciple

It may be easier to begin by describing a Generous Disciple. When I lead this exercise with church leaders the light bulbs go on immediately creating confidence and creativity.

Think about the most generous people you know. They do not even need to be believers. Picture two to three people that live incredibly generous lives, but not limited to sharing money or giving directly to the local church. **Here is a big principle to grasp, generous people are generous with every resource they possess.** There is no need to focus on their money.

Here are some starter words I have heard used again and again when describing generous people: good listeners, always seem to have time, empathetic, sympathetic, happy, patient, thoughtful, make you feel like you are important, kind, encouraging, available, appear to live a life at a healthy pace, live with margin, etc.

Now, imagine a church filled with people exuding these attributes? How would your culture be different? Would things like worship, volunteerism, personal invitation, and training meetings be any different? This exercise creates another bank of focused words to use during the year in Offering Talks.

(3) Types of Givers

Not every giver is ready for the same next step so it is very helpful to name the different types of givers in your church along with an appropriate principle that will engage and inspire. Self monitoring our language and concepts is pretty intuitive for each of us. If you were to walk to a preschooler your language would be different than if a college student approached you. Of course, both would not relate to a mature business leader or even a retired adult. The different types of givers have the same concept. Here are five kinds of givers to help you begin your thinking.

Beginning Giver - This indicates someone who has yet to make their first gift. They may want to, but do not know how or why. Every disciplined giver begins as a first time giver so learn to focus your language to help with an inspiring and clear initial step.

Consistent Giver - They have made their first gift, maybe even becoming an occasional giver. Helping them move to a monthly giver is a big step. I do a lot of research on the churches I consult. One of the key levels of giving growth is when people give 10-12 times a year. This indicates they are developing a lifestyle habit.

Percentage Giver - Some would equate this with tithing, but we have already addressed the confusion today with that specific word. It will need some education. You may also teach for percentage growth to and beyond the tithe.

Expanding Giver - This step helps long time titheers think beyond this practice to what is next. It also helps introduce “above and beyond” opportunities that are readily available during the year.

Extravagant Giver - Someone can be extravagant in a moment or over a specific season of their life. These givers can also be creative in terms of donating non cash assets, like securities and property. Small business owners will be especially inspired by this opportunity when a large sale is in their future or a cause that stokes their passion. Of course, it does not have to do necessarily with an amount as much as an unstoppable giving spirit to something specific for a period of time.

(4) Giving Heroes

I love this topic. I actually have a list of about fifteen Giving Heroes I have located in the Bible. I am sure there are many more, you may create your own list. A Giving Hero helps a person have a story they can emotionally attach themselves to for growth and inspiration. Here are just a few.

- Abraham and Jacob both gave ten percent.
- David gave tremendously as a king toward the construction of the temple.
- The boy with the fishes and loaves is a fun example.
- The Good Samaritan, though being fictitious, is certainly insightful.
- Barnabas, gave a piece of property.
- Cornelius was known for being a faithful giver.
- The widow's mite as she gave all.
- The woman who anointed Jesus comes to mind as well.

There are many more. Have some fun. Explore the Bible and start making your own list. They will open a new window of inspiration to all ages and types of givers. We need positive

examples. Principles and obedience have their place for sure, but a human story I can relate to goes a long way.

WHEN DOES YOUR CALENDAR MATTER?

First of Month - This is a great time to thank everyone for making a priority of giving in their lives as many have just been paid from work and made their gift. This would include tithers and regular givers. It is also a great time to mention both digital recurring givers as well as those who came prepared to give in the moment.

Volunteerism - Generosity is not only about our money. Countless people give of their time, talents, and gifts. This type of investment needs to be celebrated and thanked. Oftentimes people serve, serve, serve, but never hear a story of transformation or receive personal thanks from leaders. Volunteerism is a gateway to other forms of generosity so cheer it on.

Ministry Accomplishment - There are many key moments during the year to highlight a ministry accomplishment that was fueled by generosity. You can mention the facility, volunteerism, and financial resources needed to carry out specific ministries. This is especially supportive when you need to connect general budget giving to a tangible kingdom investment.

Mission Engagement - Mission offerings and trips are wonderfully unique ways to help people engage in a big opportunity. Ordinary lives go global by meeting desperate needs either with our prayers, giving, or physical participation.

Community Development - People are especially passionate these days about their city and community. It is a powerful thought to consider what it might sound like if we were known as the most generous nonprofit in the city. Your investment in local benevolence needs or faith-based social ministries are wonderful opportunities that encourage your people. Helping them see they are part of a mission far beyond just paying for the building they are sitting in is eye opening.

Financial Leadership - It is always great to discuss how appreciative you are for your financial leaders and staff that provide good stewardship of church resources. This also educates on the governing boards, teams, or committees which helps a donor feel secure in the organizational structure. If you can speak toward being above budget with your giving and expenses below budget that is a big win. These seeds will bear fruit in the future if your church requires congregational vote for budget approval every year.

Abundant Generosity - Providing a giving update is always positive. In the past, churches had a practice of putting their budget needs in the bulletin right next to their actual offering amounts. The thought was to always show a financial deficiency so people would give. Another way to look at it would be showing a deficiency could imply people aren't being generous, leaders aren't budgeting well, and the staff is not spending wisely. Of course, none of this may be true, but it leaves the reader open to interpret as they like. Donors like to be a part

of a winning organization that is being supported by a large group of people. Together, this team is advancing the cause very well. Any time you can honestly express that giving is above expenses it is a good thing to do.

Capital Improvement - These type projects are very expensive and highly motivating to a large group of people. Every church participant is benefitting from countless people who gave generously for years to provide parking, ministry space, and a worship seat. They are also unaware that replacing a sound system, painting walls, or replacing an AC unit is a costly ongoing expense. When these items are being provided via ongoing or designated giving I would always draw attention to work that happens during the week behind the scenes providing a wonderful experience for everyone on Sunday.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE SOME OFFERING TALK SCRIPTS TO GET YOU STARTED?

HERE YOU GO.

First Sunday of the Month - *It is the first of the month and I know many of us are gainfully employed or enjoying retirement. Either way we are very grateful for how God cares for us through the gifts of our careers. There is a Bible principle often referred to as first fruits.*

Proverbs 3:9-10 says, "Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest; then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine." (CSB) *I want to make sure you know about this principle and receive the affirmation it provides. Thank you for walking in it. It contains both faith and a promise. When we give our firstfruits we are acknowledging who is our provider which both affirms and grows our faith. These verses also contain a promise for future provision because our God is faithful. So whether you gave digitally during the week when you were paid or you are prepared to give today, I want you to hear the affirmation of the Lord and the promise of his word. Thank you for your generosity. The kingdom of God is advancing through us together." (Then provide specific offering instructions and pray.)*

Second Sunday of the Month - *As we prepare for our offering today I want to acknowledge our many generous volunteers. Thank you for sharing your time, gifts, and talents with all of us. I especially want to say a special word to our Greeters and Welcome Team. You arrived early to prepare your station whether it was putting out a sign or setting up the coffee. Thank you for your energy, warmth, and smile. You never know what is going on in a person's life, yet our Greeters and Welcome Team are bringing the love to each and every one of us, lifting our spirits. Thank you for your generosity. (Then provide specific offering instructions and pray.)*

Third Sunday of the Month - *We have just celebrated a big week of Vacation Bible School. If you were around this week it was loud, fun, and filled with energy. There were people providing snacks, handling crafts, hosting guests, and of course teaching God's word in a way that a child*

could understand. You never know the fruit that will come from the seeds that are sown. I know you left tired and are maybe still recovering, but I want you to know your investment was well worth it. When an event like VBS occurs we might not directly think that this was an event costing thousands of dollars hosted in a well prepared facility. All provided free of charge to the community because of everyone's generosity. Thank you for your investment. Countless families are very appreciative of your partnership in training their kids in the faith. (Then provide specific offering instructions and pray.)

Fourth Sunday of the Month - *This week we made an investment in the local shelter providing meals for Thanksgiving and coats for winter. Many ministries participated as we collected over 50 brand new jackets of all sizes and colors. Because of your generosity we also made a \$3,000 donation covering ministry opportunities like meals at Thanksgiving, medical costs, and important job training classes for the 50 residents. This ministry was extremely surprised by your generosity and very grateful. Thank you for being such amazing people. What you can do as an individual is important, but we can do together is truly impressive. You are more bearing fruit than you realize. Thank you. (Then provide specific offering instructions and pray.)*

Digital Givers - *Many of you give all week long. As a matter of fact we actually receive offerings every day of the month via app, text, or online giving. I want to thank each and everyone that has set up a gift to occur automatically or give spontaneously while sipping your coffee in your recliner. Don't you just love the opportunity to give in a meaningful moment in a modern way? So you know, when you give digitally it actually saves the church time because the entire process is automated. This frees up our team for more ministry activity so that is a bonus fruit to your generosity. If you do not give digitally and would like to learn, feel free to go to our website or contact the church office. It is safe, secure, easy, and very much appreciated. (Then provide specific offering instructions and pray.)*

Financial Leadership - *I want to take a moment to acknowledge our staff and financial leaders. As we close the quarter, many of you will be receiving a quarterly report via email. It is going to be a wonderful testimony to both your generosity and the wise stewardship of our financial leaders. Our staff continues to spend wisely as giving is above expenses for the year while church attendance continues to grow. You may have noticed that there are fewer parking spots available or even seats in your ministry room are getting full. That is because we have enjoyed a number of guests and new members. This is the ultimate fruit of your generosity and the wisdom of our leaders. So thank you to everyone. I hope you enjoy the report. (Then provide specific offering instructions and pray.)*

Capital Improvement - *I know you are enjoying the beautiful building that has been generously provided by faithful people over the decades. It is easy to take for granted because it is just here every Sunday, but I do want to honor the people of the past as well as you for helping us maintain this facility. You may not know but the lights are on and air conditioning runs seven days a week because ministry is always active. This summer we have taken the time to refresh several rooms, repaired the roof, and replaced an air conditioning unit. All this work occurred during the week and the church was able to pay cash. This was possible because of your*

generosity and the wise planning of our leaders. Thank you to both. (Then provide specific offering instructions and pray.)

Next Steps: *I hope you have found this content helpful. So you know, I help church leaders create plans that grow generous disciples. The outcomes can be increased undesignated gifts, above and beyond giving, or a special emphasis like, capital campaigns. I serve all styles and settings of congregations from church plants to county seat towns to mega-congregations. If you have a question or just want to chat about generosity feel free to reach out to me. Honestly, it is not an inconvenience. I love talking about this stuff as it has been my full-time career for over two decades.*

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“Moving the kingdom forward in refreshing ways.”