

TOP 10 REASONS PEOPLE GIVE TO THE CHURCH

In our U.S. Congregational Life Survey, worshipers rated the extent to which ten factors influence their decision to give to their congregation.

1. Gratitude for God's love and goodness.
2. Wanting to contribute to God's work.
3. A sense of religious duty to give.
4. The Bible's teaching on giving.
5. A sense of obligation to support the work of their local congregation.
6. Hearing about specific needs
7. A sense of gratitude for help my family or I have received at the church
8. Habit or custom
9. The leader's urging to give
10. Possible tax benefits

How can leaders encourage financial giving?

First, worshipers want to know how their contributions make a difference. Congregational leaders should highlight the specific ways that worshipers' financial gifts are changing lives in the congregation and the community. The emphasis should be on ministry rather than on supporting programs.

Second, leaders can help worshipers become percentage givers. Currently, only about 14 percent of worshipers said they decide how much to give based on a percentage of their income. In a national study of giving, researchers found that worshipers in "percentage-giving churches" contribute three times more dollars than worshipers in congregations that ask for offerings in dollar amounts (*Money Matters*, Dean Hoge, et al., Westminster John Knox, 1996). In percentage-giving churches worshipers are asked, "What percentage of your income do you feel God is calling you to give?" This question is consistent with the Bible's instructions about giving.

Third, only a very small percentage of worshipers report that the urging of the congregation or leader is a major influence on their financial decision-making. Is this because it rarely happens? Congregational leaders can emphasize that financial giving is a spiritual matter—an opportunity to express gratitude to God and contribute to God's work.

By Cynthia Woolever, director of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey. This article is adapted from an article that appeared on the U.S. Congregational Life Survey's blog found at <http://presbyterian.typepad.com/beyondordinary/2010/03/ten-reasons-why-we-give.html>.