

# Is Your Church Giving Page Helping or Hurting?



**Generosity**  
by LifeWay

## The Five Questions

Recently I asked several leading experts in the stewardship and generosity space to share several churches with me that they regard as leading the way in terms of generosity and stewardship. I then took this random list of leading churches, along with several others I was aware of, and began doing my own comparison on the user experience of their church giving web pages. Here are some critical questions I was seeking answers for:

**As a giver, how does the giving page on the church website make me feel?** Church money and giving is a pretty emotional experience. How a visitor to your site feels upon their very first visit is extremely important. Welcoming a new giver, while guiding a repeated giver toward their next step, needs specific attention.

**Is the giving web page church-focused or giver-focused?** The money topic at church can often shift back and forth between two extremes. We can settle into a mostly silent approach, attempting to be sensitive to our people, then we can rush into a financial need, funding gap, or opportunity with an energized plunge. This on-again, off-again conversation leaves most churches talking about money from the church's perspective. But what about the giver? What are they thinking, dreaming, and looking for when they want to make a gift? Being giver-focused is a critical discipleship transition.

**Is the giving web page limited to receiving a transaction, or does it unleash personal transformation?** Once you click the "Give" button on the home screen, where does the journey lead? Exporting a potential giver to an outside URL (not staying within the familiarity of the local church website) creates concerns on the part of the giver. Or maybe your button immediately goes to a giving form, skipping the opportunity to help a giver process what God may be doing in their life or the church. A giver is desiring transformation. They have personal expectations when it comes to giving that are different than when they log onto their banking bill pay.

**Is the giving web page simple, fun, and easy to navigate?** It surprised me how often I was immediately taken to a "Create Login" page. This can create a lot of friction and frustration. Beginning givers may want the convenience of giving a small, one-time gift to just test out the system before diving deeper. The Bible does speak of joy-filled giving that God rewards. The giving web page is a discipleship tool. You are having a conversation with a highly interested person. Engage them in a fun and inspiring way.

**Does the giving web page communicate security, safety, and necessary information for me to eagerly make a gift?** The distrust of church money and technology are working against you. However, today's people are eagerly engaging digital commerce more and more. As a matter of fact, commerce is moving from a desktop to a mobile phone at a rapid pace. Your giving experience must implicitly communicate the same level of confidence (or even more) than the most common marketplace websites your people are utilizing.

With these questions as a filter, and my experience clicking around a number of leading church websites, here are some high-level thoughts to enable your giving page to become more helpful to your people and mission.

## **1. How does our church giving page feel?**

First, the feel of your page is extremely important. Your website is talking for you when you do not realize it. It may be a person clicking around who has yet to even visit your church, or it may be a new member trying to learn how to make their first gift. What if it is a key giver seeking to make a significant deposit into your future? Each person is interacting with your church via digital communication. It is not a personal conversation in an office with an understanding, friendly human being. However, we need to communicate as if that very thing is occurring.

Here are two ways to create a warm and inviting feel from the very first line. First, develop the lead paragraph at the top of the page to engage an individual. Do not speak about a transaction, login, tithing, or financial need. Be person-centered, discipleship-oriented, and open doors they did not even know existed. Surprise them with joy and promise. Something like, "Giving can make a lasting impact—an impact in a life, community, and world. Thank you for exploring the opportunity to give. You are on a journey of joining with hundreds/thousands of others who are sharing their resources to make a difference both here in our community and around the world. Please take a moment and view the brief video from our pastor. He has some personal insights he would like to share. Then preview the different ways giving is making a difference through our church. You can make a gift through a number of different avenues, so have fun."

The second item you will want to add to the top of your giving web page is a brief 60-second video from your pastor. This video should express words of appreciation, vision, impact, and promise. Something like, "Thank you for taking the time to preview the many ways you can give at our church. Just the fact that you have made it to this video is very encouraging, and I want you to be affirmed. The Bible says in Proverbs 11:25 that a generous person will prosper and the one who refreshes others will be refreshed. I know you came to discover how you could make a difference with your gift, and you will, but I want you to know that God is a generous God and His favor rests upon us when we live generously. So as you get ready to give, you can also get ready to enjoy the experience and be blessed. I want you to know that our church is doing fine financially. We are not in a need or crisis. We actually operate with no debt and a surplus for future opportunities. Know that your gift will be handled with the highest level of integrity with our leaders and our technology platform. Both are fully compliant with all laws and regulations. Finally, every week we help families, we support missionaries, we fund local non-profits, and we invest in our ministries. Rest assured, your gift is making a difference both today and in eternity."

## **2. Is our church giving page church-centric or giver-centric?**

Unfortunately, most churches are stuck in the habits of the past. It is still pretty common today, but it used to be universal, that an attender would open the church bulletin or newsletter to easily find how church giving was compared to budget. It is kind of a weekly financial report. This has led many pastors to subscribe to the thought that if you do not show a deficit, then people will not feel the need to give. This type of thinking leads to joyless giving. People either do not give because they do not want to throw their good money into a poorly run organization, or it leads the faithful to give out of a constant sense of obligation.

I have heard many pastors say that their offering time is far from the experience of joy-filled giving the Bible describes. Well, as leaders we do reap what we sow. Let's start sowing different seeds. Following your opening comments and pastoral video, it is time to keep the attention focused on the giver. Remember, they have expectations as they move through your site. They are desiring to be a part of something exciting. I would not move into the biblical teaching on tithing, why people should

give, or what designated accounts the church is promoting. Instead, look to turn the conversation to impact. Convert your budget and designated funds conversations into stories of transformation.

I would suggest you provide a few stories and possible short videos to help people see the difference a dollar makes. Be true to your vision language and where you are seeing the most results. You may also want to think about language you use to communicate specific budget lines or designated accounts. Consistent language will help communication stick.

Today's givers want to see the eternal-ROI (return on investment). If they cannot quickly discern the value of a gift to your church, then they will click over to the non-profit web page that is requesting their support. What a contrast in stories they will discover. The church often leads with need, while non-profits tend to lead with impact. Why the difference? Churches have the wonderful gift of a weekly offering and the teachings of Scripture related to the discipline of giving to the local church. Non-profits have neither going for them, yet they far outpace the church when it comes to articulating their ROI.

When you design your vision and transformation section of your giving web page, be sure to include three clearly defined sections. You may create more based on where your church allocates resources and the dramatic results you are experiencing. However, I would have no more than five. Here are the areas you should consider covering:

**Next Generation:** People love to know they are impacting the next generation of adults and church leaders. Highlighting your kids, students, and college ministries will be very inspiring.

**Life Transformation:** This can include ministries such as addiction groups, marital counseling, small groups, and benevolence. Make sure people know the pain points you are touching to transform a life. The numbers of people connecting via church membership, salvation, and baptism can also be included.

**City/Community Engagement:** People want to see that their church isn't spending all its money on itself. The church should be the most generous organization in the community. Your people are passionate about where they live; so the more your church is partnering with local non-profits, the better. You will actually experience more of your people channeling their gifts through your church when their confidence is raised in this area.

**Global Mission:** This can also include your state and the U.S. The world is a small place these days, and people want to connect with needs beyond their reach.

**Capital Investment:** Church facilities are major vision-advancing investments. Do not wait for a building campaign need to arise before you try to transform your building language to vision language. Your building is quite possibly the biggest investment you make every week as a local non-profit seeking to transform its community. Speak vision, not need.

### **3. Is our church giving page transactional or transformational?**

Let's say a person comes to your site and clicks the "Give" button. If the next thing they see is a login screen, or some kind of extensive data entry sheet regarding the transaction of a gift, they will honestly be deterred from giving a gift. Logins and transaction details are important, but the end result should be a disciple that is growing in generosity, not just a person who is giving a financial gift.

Churches that are strong in generosity have a clear growth path for every type of giver. Not everyone is in the same stage of growth, nor will they relate to the same conversation. Create some easy on-ramps for everyone. Speak to their heart not their wallet. God will speak to them about their wallet.

Here are some different types of givers and ministries you can consider offering:

**Beginning Givers** may need to experience a personal financial money management class like Ron Blue's, *God Owns It All* or Art Rainer's, *The Money Challenge*. They may also benefit from private financial counseling if their finances are in a tough position. At some point they will also need to attend your New Members Class to help increase their heart engagement.

**Consistent Givers** may need to become more involved in a small group or service team. Learning to be generous in all areas of life is important. There are also some generosity based curriculum like *Generous Life* from LifeWay that could be a great small group series.

**Tithing Givers** need to be encouraged to go beyond what could be considered a minimal expectation. The generosity journey doesn't end with tithing. It is just beginning. A small group utilizing the *Overflow* curriculum by GenerousChurch would be a solid consideration.

**Expanding and Extravagant Givers** are giving beyond the tithe. They are actually looking for ways to be even more generous. Chip Ingram's book on *The Genius of Generosity* would be an inspiring topic of study for your small group. These givers also need to see the clear path of where to focus their above and beyond giving to advance the vision the fastest for their local church.

As you can see, a Beginning Giver is thinking very differently than a Extravagant Giver. Both are visiting your website and looking to get involved. Help them see their next growth step and not just their next gift. Growth unleashes generosity.

#### **4. Is our church giving page simple, fun, and easy?**

The modern world and all its technologies are fun for people. Now I know technology can be frustrating to some and even avoided by others. However, the vast majority of people are really enjoying all the opportunities that technology is bringing them. In the past, there was only one way to give and only one day on which to give. Your church would have mailed you your yearly giving envelopes which would have helped you write a check in advance of Sunday as you prepared to give. Today, people show up less, have more debt, less cash, and are less prepared to give. However, people love being generous. Giving feels good. God made it that way. If someone is on your giving page, they are very interested and excited about making a gift—so speak their language.

Every church should have six fun, celebrated ways of giving. They are text, app, online, offering time, mail, and noncash. Brick and mortar stores are doing less commerce as more individuals move to the online and app purchasing experience. For many, it is a lot more fun to sit in the comfort of their home to shop, order, and purchase. This type of commerce happens all day, every day. It is becoming the preferred way to make a transaction for purchasers. So get in the game and turn every one of your givers' smartphones into their own personal giving kiosks. In essence, an offering plate in their pockets.

The church giving experience now has a measuring stick. Your people are comparing their transaction process to that of Uber®, Starbucks®, Amazon®, and others. It is not enough to simply turn on the

giving feature in your Church Management Software, or link your church app to your church giving page. The user experience simply is not the same. For instance, suppose when a person hits "Give" they are then exported outside your church web page to a screen that looks foreign in terms of color, language, design, graphics, font, and URL this creates "friction." All the good will you have created on your giving page has now been quickly undone.

Generosity by LifeWay has created what we call a unified omnichannel giving experience. The giving opportunity is easily customized by you and embedded directly into your church's giving page. It is as simple as copy and paste. Whether a giver wants to text or give online, the experience is always the same. It is as unified as the Twitter® app, Facebook® app, and other online experiences people are accustomed to.

In addition, we have created a designated giving app. Your people can "Favorite" your church just like the feature they would utilize in other apps. Once the app is opened, your church appears. Then after a couple of easy clicks, a gift has been made. All of these digital gifts can then be celebrated by both you and the giver. Customized "Thank-You's" can immediately be sent, which is a powerful experience for the giver. You can also enable a feature that allows the giver to celebrate their gift via their social media network. Just imagine a giver sharing with their friends and family the difference they are making in helping advance the vision of their church!

Finally, every church has received noncash gifts. They can be a mixed blessing at best. If it is a gift of stocks, bonds, or securities, that is easy enough to liquidate. But what about a car, boat, RV, jewelry, business surplus, or even an unused gift card? Generosity by LifeWay puts the fun back into giving and receiving these items. Any item of value can be given online. Our national network of liquidators will reach out to the giver, receive the gift, liquidate it, and deliver the proceeds to the local church. It really is that easy!

So don't make the mistake of thinking that creating an online transaction page is all that is needed. Nope. If you want giving to be fun, joy-filled, and celebrated, put an offering plate in your givers' pockets!

## **5. Does your church giving page communicate safety and security?**

As previously mentioned, giving to a church through technology can be an uneasy experience for many. It is extremely important to provide some detail for those who are looking for it. I would not include these items on the giving page, but I would provide easy links for quick access. Here are some items you may consider including:

An **Annual Report** letting people know where the money is being invested and the results that are being experienced. This should not be a spreadsheet or budget document, but a visual representation of ministry in action. Pictures, graphics, charts, and future dreams should all be included. Also, I would not hesitate to make available a more detailed Financial Report. The more willing you are to disclose the numbers, stopping short of exposing personal salary numbers, the better.

A **Frequently Asked Question's** page addressing the top ten most commonly asked questions. Here are some sample questions to consider that you will need to provide a brief answer for:

Is my information safe when I give online?  
If I have a question whom do I call?

Can I set up a recurring gift?

Can I edit a recurring gift?

If I give online, by text, and by app, will all these gifts be included in my giving statement?

How do I get access to my giving statement?

How do I change my credit card number?

How do I give a noncash gift?

Where can I find help to log into my account?

How is the church doing financially?

Finally, do not hesitate to include a document that would detail any financial policies, practices, or certifications of approval from financial institutions. Transparency can be shockingly refreshing these days. The bottom line is to leave no doubt that your church's finances, the giver's gift, and the giver's information is 100% secure by law, policy, and capable church leadership. Building the confidence of the giver will unleash future giving.

## **Unleash Your Technology**

Vision travels at the speed of your resources, and your resources travel at the speed of your givers. To unleash joy-filled, generous disciples, your giving webpage can communicate over and over again, every day, all week long. Take the time to create a one-of-a-kind giving experience. Blow people away with how committed you are to giving them the technology they are accustomed to experiencing. Speak their language, dream their dream, and unite them around the journey of advancing the Kingdom alongside of hundreds of thousands of others.

At Generosity by LifeWay, we have invested the time and money in the technology it takes to make giving easy for the church. We have also leveraged the wisdom of both generosity and stewardship experts from across the country. This ebook is simply one of many tools you can discover. We provide a best-in-class digital giving platform with all the wisdom of a full-time generosity pastor delivered right to every church for a low monthly subscription fee. We call it the 2 for 1 service: every giving channel and the coaching you need to unleash generosity. Check us out online at [www.lifeway.com/generosity](http://www.lifeway.com/generosity).