

Scripture Commentary and Sermon Starter: Give a **LOVE OFFERING** with Cheer

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”—2 Corinthians 9:7

This familiar verse is a standard for stewardship campaign slogans. It is also used in many offertory prayers. The aim is to encourage generous donations, given with a smile.

The Apostle Paul wrote these lines in his second letter to the church at Corinth. He encouraged church members to gather a special offering for Christians in Jerusalem. He saw the offering as a much-needed act of charity. In essence, Paul sought a love offering from the church at Corinth.

A hallmark of Christian living is sharing one’s resources for the benefit of the community. Christians live their faith by doing acts of service—not as a transaction, expecting something in return, but rather as a response to all that God has given and continues to give.

The practice of gathering love offering may not be a common one in your congregation. However, it is practiced in many church traditions to thank a particular person in the church or community; support programs and projects that fall outside budgeted items; or when an unexpected expense occurs that needs to be supported.

A love offering is extra—money given in addition to one’s regular offerings and tithes. Love offerings are tangible gifts in response to a particular occasion or need. They are expressions of love, appreciation, and support.

Paul was eager to complete the love offering. At the same time, he was anxious about the readiness of the Corinthian Christians to fulfill their promise to gather funds. His relationship with some at Corinth was complicated; there were issues, concerns, and misunderstandings. Paul penned 2 Corinthians 8-9 with two things in mind: to make sure things were okay between the church and him; and to urge them to stay the course concerning the offering.

To make his point clear, Paul uses the Greek word *hilaros* to describe how they were to give: with joyful and willing spirits. ²Second Corinthians 9:7 is the only place this word appears in the New Testament. *Hilaros* means giving freely; without hesitation; without resentment. A cheerful giver is one who has a genuine desire to help others.

Paul did not want the Corinthians to give to appease him; nor did he want them to withhold their giving because they are upset with him. So he reminds them that the offering is not about him at all; the offering was about honoring their connection to sisters and brothers in the faith. God has blessed them with life and with Jesus who lived and died for their sakes. Their response to these gifts is to gift others—what they have, they share—joyfully and selflessly.

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is about sharing, loving, and giving for the sake of others, too. In collaboration with local and international partners, OGHS engages in tangible acts of love, compassion, and care.

Contributions to OGHS are **LOVE OFFERINGS**—special, above and beyond one’s regular giving, supporting and empowering others to know that God loves and cares for God’s people.

Our collective **LOVE OFFERING** helps families live more efficiently. It empowers organizations to fight hunger and food insecurity. Our **LOVE OFFERING** supports places of hospitality for displaced persons. Our **LOVE OFFERING** changes lives and transforms communities for generations to come.

While mainly focused on monetary gifts, **LOVE OFFERINGS** also can be acts of kindness closer to home: tutoring students after school; making a casserole for a new mom; coaching a youth soccer team; making blankets for the unsheltered; volunteering at a soup kitchen. No act of kindness is ever wasted time.



photo: @disciplephoto

As you prepare to preach and teach the theme, **OUR LOVE OFFERING TO THE WORLD**, highlight how members of your church and community have already given love offerings—sharing their time, talent, and treasure. Make a list and celebrate those already making a difference in your church and community. Highlight how OGHS is making a difference through your gifts by sharing mission stories.

There may be many reasons that people hesitate to give—donor fatigue, inflation, personal financial difficulties, disinterest. A gentle reminder: God continues to bless us with resources we can and should share—with hearts filled with gratitude and joy. Just

as God continues to provide for us, let us not miss an opportunity to provide for others.

Let us choose, cheerfully and generously, to give to One Great Hour of Sharing—it is **OUR LOVE OFFERING TO THE WORLD**.

²<https://biblehub.com/Greek/2431.htm>

Children's Moment

Constructed to be used in your own words, or to be followed as a script, this children's moment focuses on the emotions we feel around giving. The script and design may be adjusted to fit your virtual or hybrid worship context.

Theme

One Great Hour of Sharing reminds us that we are all called to be generous givers to others and that when we do, we should do so with a cheerful spirit. When we give to others, we are giving a love offering to the whole world, without even leaving our town.

Materials needed

- Small, heart-shaped papers that children can write on
- Crayons or washable markers for children to use (enough for each expected child)
- An open, willing ear and spirit

Script Suggestion

I want to ask you a serious question. When I ask it, I want you to give me a serious answer and not the answer you think I want you to give me:

Do you like to give gifts or receive gifts?

Give time for responses.

I was betting that most of you liked to receive gifts rather than give them. [You could also say the opposite, depending on their answers.]

The Apostle Paul, an early follower of Jesus, wrote to a church in a place called Corinth. He says some very interesting things about giving and receiving gifts. Let me share some of what he wrote –

⁷ Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn't give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver.

⁸ God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace. That way, you will have everything you need always and in everything to provide more than enough for every kind of good work. (CEB)

Paul is saying to each of us that WE can give gifts to others. That is called being "generous." Generous is a big word. Do you know what it means?

Give time for responses.

As you think about your own daily lives at school, at your various activities and at home, we can be generous, can't we? We can help others, share an encouraging word or give to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. We can be generous when we help a friend with homework; help to make a casserole for a family who loses a loved one; or pick up trash around our neighborhood. There are SO MANY things we can do, right?

I am going to give each of you a paper heart and a crayon/marker. I'd like for you to take that heart and write something you could give to another person as an offering. If you can think of something now, I'd like you to write it down.

If you can't think of anything immediately, you can take the heart with you.

But whether you write something now or not, all of us are going to take our hearts and when the offering plates come by this morning, I want to ask you to place it in the offering plate as an offering to the world.

We remember that today is a very special day as the adults are also giving their special offering to One Great Hour of Sharing, which will be their way of offering love to the entire world!

At this time, you could give children a few minutes to share some of the gifts they wrote on their hearts (if you have seen anyone doing that). You can also share what you would write on yours.

If you want, you can also share any further details about the offering or other community details.

Can we pray a blessing together?

Very good! Let's pray:

You can pray extemporaneously or use this prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for loving us so much and showing us how we can love others by being generous givers. By offering a gift today to the special offering or doing something good for another person, we plant seeds of generosity. We can love those we will never even meet through our gifts to the special offering today. With thankful hearts, we pray. Amen.

**** Note following the children's sermon:** These hearts can be collected from the offering plates after the service and displayed as a collage in the church or the sanctuary.

Offering Reminder

Paper hearts could be distributed to the entire congregation a week before the One Great Hour of Sharing offering with instructions to return them the next week. On the hearts could be written the various gifts that congregants will offer the world –love, justice, peace, etc. You can connect this to the Children’s Sermon if you’d like.

The paper hearts can be collected in the offering plate or as people leave worship. You can make a collage with the paper hearts to remind your congregation of the love offering they give to the world all year round.



Order of Worship

Call to Worship

One: God invites us to be a people of generosity.

All: That's our love offering to the world.

One: God invites us to remember our blessings.

All: That's our love offering to the world.

One: God invites us to build a legacy of love.

All: That's our love offering to the world.

One: God invites us to give cheerfully.

All: That's our love offering to the world.

Prayer of Invocation

You provide for all of our needs, O God, even when we do not realize or recognize it. You are the source and we are the resource. You modeled generous giving when you freely offered us your Son, Jesus Christ. Nothing is too wonderful for you. As we begin worship today, stir up in us the desire to give cheerfully from the great wellspring of gifts you have gifted to us. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Litany of Responsive Reading

One: When communities are impacted by disaster,

All: Our love offering is comfort, provisions, and a hand to rebuild.

One: When people are displaced,

All: Our love offering is shelter, nourishment and safety.

One: When groups are afflicted by prejudice, economic hardship, or difficult circumstances beyond their control,

All: Our love offering is empowerment, strength to rise and dreams for a better future.

One: Our love offering is

All: loving our neighbor, next door and on the other side of the world.

One: Our love offering is

All: not just for this hour, but forever.

Invitation to the Offering

Let each one give as (they have) chosen

With a heart of gratitude,

Not with grumbling or reluctance,

But with a cheerful attitude

And God is able to make all grace

Abound toward you

So you will be fully equipped

And be blessed in all you do.

[To climb this hill, together we will].

This poem by New Zealand poet Michelle Lowndes reminds us that we are called to give with a positive attitude and from that, blessings flow not only for the giver but also for the receiver.

God invites us to give not because our pockets overflow or because we feel guilt. God invites us to give because our hearts are stirred, and we witness God at work in one another. We are agents of grace when we choose to give because we believe in the kingdom of God being built among us.

This is the generosity that you are invited to offer through One Great Hour of Sharing.

Your offering helps rebuild from disaster, feed the hungry, provide clean water to the thirsty, and empower the oppressed.

The apostle Paul's admonition to give generously and cheerfully is bolstered by the words of the Psalmist: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever" (112:9).

We cannot be in all of the places where our offering will eventually go, but like seeds scattered throughout the land by the wind that blows even where we cannot see it, our gifts bless the world far beyond what we can imagine. This offering IS our love offering TO the world. Let us share generously.

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, we offer these gifts in the spirit of generosity and with a heart full of gratitude for what we've been given. These offerings are one way of showing our commitment to sharing with those who are in need, neighbors near and far, whom we are unlikely to meet. We offer these gifts with a cheerful heart as our love offering to brothers and sisters we may never meet. Bless the gifts, just as you have each of us, with an extra measure of your grace. In Christ's name, Amen.

Charge & Benediction

One: God has shown us there is enough. When things are tight and the future seems uncertain,

All: We choose to give a love offering to the world.

One: God's love shapes us and molds us to share from our own blessings.

All: We choose to give a love offering to the world.

One: Go forth from this place and be

All: a love offering to the world.

Hymn Suggestions

- Amazing Grace by John Newton
- Come, Ye Thankful People, Come by Henry Alford
- Draw the Circle Wide by Mark Miller
- Demos con alegria (Give with a Cheerful Spirit) Sonia Andrea Linares M.
- Give Thanks, with a Grateful Heart by Henry Smith
- God of Grace and God of Glory by Harry Emerson Fosdick
- Great God, The Giver of All Good by James Skinner
- Now Thank We All Our God by Martin Rinkart
- Pass It On by Kurt Kaiser
- Take My Life and Let It Be by Frances Ridley Havergal
- There Shall Be Showers of Blessings by Daniel Whittle
- You Are the Seed (Sois la Semilla) by Cesáreo Gabaráin

Worship Resources

for Any Season and for Any Reason

Whether you are looking for a call to worship, a pastoral prayer, or an offering invitation, we want to help make One Great Hour of Sharing a meaningful part of your church's worship service. Maybe you are lifting up a special concern for those affected by a recent disaster, or maybe you just want to celebrate this ministry of the church that reaches so many parts of the globe. Here are some of the ways that pastors and worship leaders might incorporate One Great Hour of Sharing into the liturgy, in any season and for any reason.

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us give thanks to God for every good gift; let us give thanks to God for people of courage who help to give hope wherever there is need.

People: Today we especially pray for the people in the path of *[Hurricane Michael]* – those who have lost their lives or their loved ones, those whose livelihoods and homes have been battered by the fury of wind and sea and storm.

Leader: Be with them all, O God, with your tender mercies and abiding hope.

People: We pray for those first responders who indeed offer hope in tangible form – firefighters and paramedics, police officers and soldiers, doctors and nurses, pastors and so many others who brave danger and are a source of comfort and strength.

Leader: Our prayers will not cease when the storm passes, nor will our gifts. Through our gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing, many will receive assistance now and when the cameras are gone.

People: Thanks be to God for people who are generous with their time, their talents, their prayers, and their gifts, for they are surely a sign of God's good reign. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

After the storm:

Loving Creator,

We know that you are with us in every time and place. In all things, you are faithful. But when winds are raging, we may find it hard to hear your voice. When skies are dark, we may struggle to see your

face. When all around is chaos, fear and destruction, the peace you promise seems worlds away.

And yet we continue to seek you in the storm. And we seek you in the morning after. Surround us with the certainty of your loving presence.

To those in raging winds, speak words of calm and comfort. For those in great darkness, send light. For those surrounded by the remains of what was, answer the silence with promises of all that might be.

Hear our prayer, O Lord. Renew our strength for the days ahead. May we hear again your call to be the Church, to speak comfort to those who weep, and to be present with those who suffer. We trust that you have given us every gift we need to meet the needs of this time. Teach us to walk in the way of Christ – sharing all that we have and believing in your goodness in all things. Send us in your peace, Holy One. And may there be joy in the morning. Amen.

Offering Invitation

Hurricanes and natural disasters bring out some of the best in people. Folks of every race, of every religion or no religion, of every class, step forth to help those who are hurting; whose lives are in shambles; who may wonder if anyone cares about them in the midst of so much suffering. They need not wonder, for folks with trucks and boats have helped carry people to safety, have helped get desperately sick people to hospitals, have tried to make sure that families stay together and have a safe place to recover. Know this: we too are those people. We may not drive a truck or pilot a boat, but we too can help our neighbors in dire need. While we may want to join our hands to those *[in the affected area]* now is not yet the time. We are ready to help when our presence is needed. But in the meantime, we can pray. And we can give. Every dollar given for disaster relief to One Great Hour of Sharing—our wider church family's disaster relief ministry—will go to work through our partners to assist those impacted by this terrible *[description of the situation]*. Long after the headlines have faded and the cameras have been turned off, One Great Hour of Sharing and its partners will still be there helping with long-term recovery. Please give generously, knowing that your gifts will help both now and in the months and years to come.