

P | G | R

PASTOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Church Administration.....	3
Mail Processing.....	5
Media Services.....	5
Editorial Services.....	6
Business Office.....	6
AICF.....	7
Ministerial Training Series.....	8

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Greetings, ministers and wives!

The Apostle John uses John the Baptist to illustrate an important point. Here is an earth-shaking statement he quotes John the Baptist as saying: “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom ...” (John 1:29).

THE OTHER GOSPELS TALK ABOUT THE BRIDEGROOM, BUT ONLY THE APOSTLE JOHN MENTIONS THE BRIDE. We know how Jesus Christ suffered. So it shouldn't surprise us if His Bride needs to suffer as well. But there's another part of the picture we must never forget!

“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, REJOICETH GREATLY ...” (verse 29). John is not talking about something of the world. He is talking about *something spiritual* that really makes you rejoice GREATLY! Not just rejoice, but REJOICE GREATLY.

What is it?

Verse 29 concludes: “REJOICETH GREATLY BECAUSE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

Only the Bride hears the Bridegroom's voice. Who is “the friend of the bridegroom” John the Baptist mentioned? It is THE BRIDE OF CHRIST! We are honored to be THE FRIENDS OF GOD!

When John heard the BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE, he really REJOICED—his joy was fulfilled.

THIS VOICE COMES FROM BEYOND THE STARS. God always speaks to His very elect.

Any husband who loves his wife gives her a lot of attention. Do you think Jesus Christ, the perfect Husband, is different? Look at the attention He gives His Bride. Christ woos His Bride because He loves her so. He gives you His attention because He wants your attention. There is nothing like this in the history of man before the Word became flesh, except in a few isolated cases. What a wonderful Husband we have.

John the Baptist continued, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (verse 30). John knew it was winding down for him. He probably knew he was going to die. But at the same time, he was talking about REJOICING—*because he listened to the Bridegroom's voice!*

WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM SPEAKS, THAT MEANS HE'S TALKING ABOUT THE BRIDE AND THE WEDDING!

John the Baptist listened to the wonderful, spiritually romantic voice of his Husband. It inspired him so deeply that he wondered how he could be so honored to have his head cut off for the Bridegroom!

How about that for a real mind-blower?

Yes, we suffer, brethren. We suffer with the Bridegroom. BUT DON'T FORGET THE MARRIAGE!

Realize *why* you have trials and tests. It is suffering that gets us ready for the marriage!

A righteous death only means *you've got it made!* Of course there is sadness in death; it's not that it doesn't matter. But look at the whole picture!

John was about to be thrown into prison and have his head lopped off, and he was listening to the Bridegroom's voice! I suppose he knew Christ's evaluation of him, and as a result his joy was made full.

How easy would it be to get depressed in a situation like that? John could have said, *Here I am, doing everything I'm told—and I'm about to have my head cut off and presented on a platter to a bunch of pagans! I've got to find another religion!*

But that isn't the way he reacted at all. John the Baptist knew that the marriage to the Bridegroom was *real*—and, no matter the physical circumstances he faced, he really REJOICED WHEN THE BRIDEGROOM SPOKE AND JOHN THOUGHT ABOUT THAT MARRIAGE.

Why did John the Baptist discuss the *Bride* and the *Bridegroom* shortly before his head was cut off? He was keeping this eternal and most exalted marriage in his mind! He knew that this trial was getting him *ready* for that marriage without equal, which would last forever.

That vision caused John the Baptist to rejoice in the worst situation he ever faced.

As it says in Revelation 19:7, “Let us BE GLAD and REJOICE, and give honour to him: for THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB IS COME, and *his wife* hath made herself ready”!

We must have this vision to get ready! Without it we will fail to get ready.

Do you have deep joy that you have been invited to be a part of this marriage? That you have been honored to be called out of this world and to serve God for a short time—and in the end MARRY JESUS CHRIST?

IF WE DON'T KEEP THAT WONDERFUL MARRIAGE IN OUR MINDS, WE WON'T BE POSITIVE AND STIRRED AND INSPIRED. But if we think about it deeply, we will say—even when we're in the midst of trial—even if, like John, *we're in prison and facing execution*—that we “REJOICETH GREATLY BECAUSE OF THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE: THIS MY JOY THEREFORE IS FULFILLED”!

Is that marriage vivid in your mind? Do you think about when the marriage is consummated and you're in that headquarters temple with Jesus Christ? I know that God's very elect have this vision in their minds. But IS IT DEEP ENOUGH IN YOUR MIND TO CAUSE YOU TO REJOICE IN YOUR WORST TRIAL? You need to ponder that question!

We must suffer, but let's never forget *why* we suffer.

Throughout eternity, people will be looking at us and saying, *Why, that is the Bride of Christ!* Is that vision deep enough to keep you stirred and moved to realize where all this is leading—even if you have to die?

WE WERE *BORN* TO ACHIEVE THIS FUTURE!

THIS IS THE GREATEST MARRIAGE THERE EVER WILL BE—FOR ALL TIME—IN ALL THE UNIVERSE! THIS IS AN EPIC EVENT THAT WILL NEVER BE DUPLICATED!

BUT THE ULTIMATE TRAGEDY IS THAT 95 PERCENT OF GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY ARE TOO LUKEWARM TO WANT IT!

Unless you have this vision in your mind, you will be susceptible to falling away. Unless you see that *marriage*, YOU WON'T GET READY! We MUST have this vision in order to be motivated to make the changes that we need to make.

Jesus Christ—your Husband, your Friend—is doing EVERYTHING HE CAN to try to woo you so you won't turn away like the Laodiceans! He is spreading the table and offering EVERYTHING to His Bride! And He wants us to keep the marriage in mind so we won't be drowned in our problems and want to give up.

This marriage is a million times more exciting than any physical marriage ever was!

Think about what our Laodicean brethren are missing! It is a terrible tragedy. *Dying* is not a tragedy. MISSING OUT ON THIS MARRIAGE is a tragedy!

This is all that even God can give us!

With love, in Christ's service,



CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Passover Service Length

The Passover service should not be longer than two hours maximum. Two hours is ample time to conduct the footwashing and cover the most necessary scriptures for an inspiring Passover. The ministry must also consider that many brethren must travel several hours to return home after the service.

WHEN SHOULD ONE TAKE THE SECOND PASSOVER?

God clearly commanded that *all* of the congregation of Israel should partake in the most solemn assembly of the year, on the fourteenth day of the first month, the month of Abib (Exodus 12:6-7; Numbers 28:16). We understand that today, this means every baptized member in God's Church. God takes Passover-attendance very seriously, and commanded that those for whom it was impossible to attend the Passover during the first month of the year, that they keep this ceremony on the fourteenth day of the second month, the month of Zif, as described in Numbers 9:11. Occasionally members in God's Church request to take the second Passover, in lieu of attending on Abib 14 and we need to be sure as shepherds of the flock that they meet the tight constraints on the conditions God considers valid for such postponement.

So that we all speak the same thing, it is fitting to examine when someone is allowed to take the second Passover.

The Second Passover Instituted

"And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the Lord in his appointed season among the children of Israel? And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the Lord will command concerning you. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, *If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off*, yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of

the passover they shall keep it. BUT THE MAN THAT IS CLEAN, AND IS NOT IN A JOURNEY, AND FORBEARETH TO KEEP THE PASSOVER, EVEN THE SAME SOUL SHALL BE CUT OFF FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin" (Numbers 9:6-13).

The reason not to keep the Passover on the 14th of the first month included only uncleanness or travel into a remote area. What does this mean for us in God's Church today?

First, let's take a look at when one is unclean.

A Law of Love

The book of Leviticus gives us the overview of the causes and purification of ceremonial uncleanness. A person was deemed unclean under particular circumstances when they should quarantine themselves from the congregation. Seven main categories were distinguished:

- 1) Loathsome diseases
(Leviticus 13; 14; 15:2-3, 13-18, 25-33; 22:4).
- 2) Childbirth (Leviticus 12:1-5)
- 3) Contact with the dead
(Leviticus 22:4, 6; Numbers 19:11-21; 31:19; Deuteronomy 21:1-5, 22-23)
- 4) Contact with carcasses of animals
(Leviticus 5:2; 11:8, 22-40)
- 5) Persons or things ceremonially unclean
(Leviticus 5:3; 15:1-24; Numbers 19:22)
- 6) Warfare (Numbers 31:19-24)
- 7) Special laws concerning the Nazarites
(Numbers 6:1-12).

From Colossians 2:14 we know that the ceremonial laws were nailed to the stake, and are no longer required of us. Yet certain principles of love, concern for others, still apply.

Although the *uncleanness* caused by the above causes, is no longer an issue to consider, the principle of separation, *as a token of outgoing concern* for the remainder of the congregation, intended to prevent the spread of (possible) diseases among the congregation, is something God's Church still adheres to (see the Ministerial Training section for more details on the law of quarantine).

For obvious reasons, members with a communicable disease should not attend the Passover, but should quarantine themselves so that they may be well to partake of the second Passover, 30 days later. Also everyone who has been exposed to communicable diseases that carry

a significant incubation period, such as chicken pox, scarlet fever and the like, without ever having suffered the disease themselves (and thus built up an immunity against it), should heed the law of quarantine and not attend Passover.

Travel

Numbers 9:10 also speaks of those who are “in a journey afar off.” The Hebrew word *rachowq* translated “afar off” literally means abroad. This refers to travel into a foreign, Gentile country where there was *no opportunity* for a Passover observance. Lacking modern means of transportation, these people were unable to make it back to Israel to attend this most solemn occasion. God stressed how imperative it was for every Israelite to do their utmost to attend Passover on the 14th of Abib.

In today’s society, this latter condition would be rare. Our modern means of transportation allow most of God’s people to attend a place where this solemn occasion is being conducted. In rare situations, it may be permissible for members to keep the Passover on their own, but realizing the deep significance of God’s command everyone of us should endeavor to attend *if at all possible* as well.

The Important Spiritual Significance

In a co-worker letter dated April 22, 1959, Mr. Armstrong wrote, “Because of the very important spiritual significance of the Passover, God has provided that those unable to take it on the first date should take it on the second. . . . To miss the Passover means missing much of the real significance of God’s plan, and the other feast days would not be as meaningful as they should. If you did not observe the Days of Unleavened Bread after the first Passover, then you should observe seven days of unleavened bread after the second, or alternate, Passover. This shows the process of putting sin out of our lives. The first and last days of this period of unleavened bread following the second Passover would NOT be Sabbaths, however.”

Cut Off

Only under very special circumstances, *beyond the individual’s control*, were Israelites permitted to take the second Passover. Those who did not meet these conditions and yet failed to attend the Passover were to be “cut off” (Numbers 9:13). For us today we know it means we’d have no part with Jesus Christ (John 13:8).

Every biblical reference encourages us to assemble on this occasion. Following the well-known passage in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul wrote, “Wherefore my brethren, *when ye come together to eat* [the Passover], tarry one for another” (verse 33).

Every member of God’s Church ought to take the Passover—either in a congregational setting, or at home. For those for whom it is impossible to attend the first, God saw fit to have a second opportunity be presented 30 days later. This however is not a loophole we should exploit to excuse ourselves from making every effort to attend on Abib 14. Instead, let’s exhort our brethren not to forsake the assembling of ourselves, on the anniversary of the death of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, especially not “as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

MEAT IN DUE SEASON

As a reminder, the senior minister who speaks during the afternoon service on a holy day is responsible for the *main message* about the meaning of the day. This, however, does not mean the morning speaker should steer clear of the day’s meaning. Ideally, the morning message on a holy day should “set the table” for the main speaker to then come along and provide the main course. For example, during the days of Unleavened Bread, while the afternoon speaker might put a more general focus on getting the sin out of our lives, and how removing the leaven from our homes teaches us that lesson, there are *dozens* of other subjects, covered in numerous pieces of Church literature, that would serve as a perfect complement to that kind of message.

As long as we are all beseeching God for guidance in our message preparation, He will find a way to tie it all together. Added to that, as a morning speaker, there is nothing wrong with contacting the main speaker ahead of time if you are not sure about the content of your message. Besides advising you on what to steer clear of, he may feed you with a number of subjects or ideas that he may not have time to cover.

There may be some exceptions to this format, of course. For instance, if Mr. Flurry is speaking in your church area and chooses to address a subject that is not as central to the day’s meaning—like when he presents new revelation—he may instruct the morning speaker to handle more of the day’s meaning. Another exception might arise when a taped message is played during one of the services. In this case, your regional director can give you the proper direction needed to organize the messages for the day.

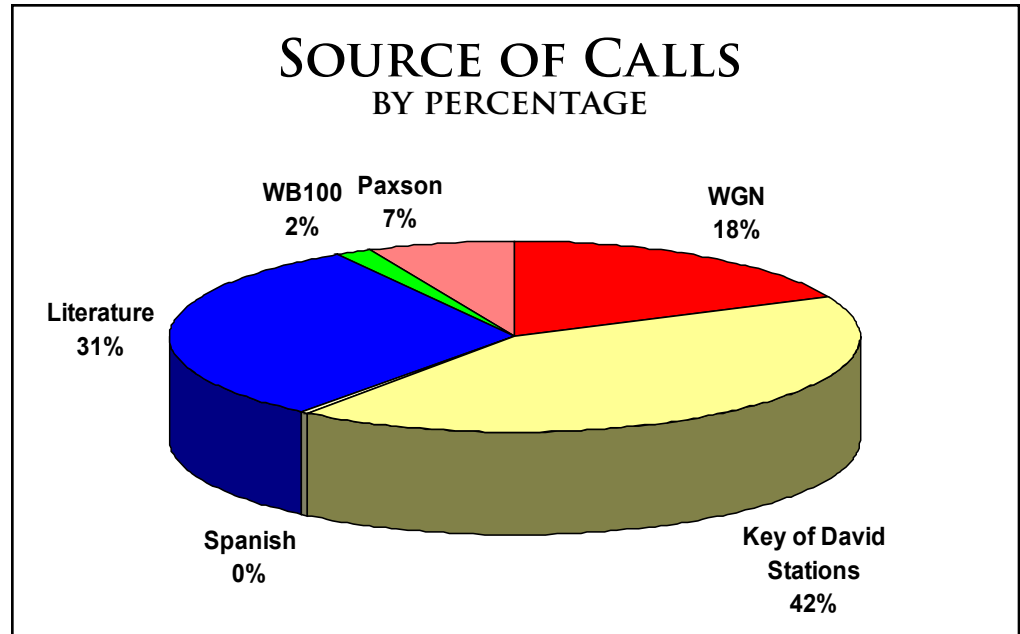
No matter the circumstance, the main thing we want to remember is to give meat in due season. And keeping the above points in mind will help to ensure that God’s people are fed to the full on His holy days. This, after all, is the reason we even have two services on those days—so that brethren might get the *very most* out of the day.

MAIL PROCESSING

CALL CENTER

We use several different toll-free numbers to better determine which form of media produced by the Philadelphia Church of God generates a phone call requesting literature from the Church. We use a separate toll-free number that is printed in all of our literature. We use a separate number for WGN, a separate number for PAX (now called the i-Network), another different number for WB-100 stations, an entirely different number for all other U.S. and Canadian TV stations, a number for the Spanish publications and so on. We commonly receive anywhere from 10,000–14,000 total calls per month. The

chart below shows the media source (by percentage) that generated the calls for literature:



MEDIA SERVICES

KEY OF DAVID MARCH RESPONSE

During the month of March, God inspired a few subjects for *The Key of David* program which traditionally bring in lower response than the average. When Mr. Flurry addresses subjects such as parental responsibility, fatherhood, history, education or Mr. Churchill, our response levels often drop.

Mr. Flurry did have several programs recently touching on those subjects. While the response was not as strong as a prophecy program (which always draw a lot of callers), we received more callers per program than we normally would when covering those subjects.

March 2006 will still outperform March 2005 by at least 35 percent. March and April typically mark our two strongest months of response. As we move into May and the summer months, response levels usually taper off—though in the past year or two, the decline has not been as strong as in the past. This is an industry-wide occurrence as more people are probably involved in outdoor activities rather than watching TV inside during the warmer months. Nonetheless, *The Key*

of David program is drawing more response than ever before. We have not had less than 1,000 calls per week (generated by the TV program alone) more than four times in the past 15 months! So far in 2006, we are averaging 1,986 calls per week—which is an increase over the 2005 average of 1,768 calls per week.

KEY OF DAVID WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Program Title: “Who Is Biblical Assyria?”

Airdate: April 2, 2006

Literature Offered: *The Rising Beast*,
Isaiah’s End-Time Vision

Synopsis: The Bible contains many dire prophecies for America and Britain. God says He will use “Assyria” to correct these nations in the near future. Do you know who biblical Assyria is today? If so, you can see these prophetic events already beginning to unfold! Next week on *The Key of David*, Gerald Flurry discusses who is biblical Assyria?

EDITORIAL SERVICES

COURT CASE BOOK UPDATE

Stephen Flurry's book about the PCG's lawsuit with the WCG is nearing completion. As of the end of March, 21 of the 26 chapters were completed, with about half of the book edited. Fact checking has begun, and officials are looking into how the book can be distributed com-

mercially. The book should be finished and ready to distribute before the end of summer. Meanwhile, more excerpts may be added to the *Trumpet* magazine. Please continue to pray for God's inspiration on the book as well as open doors for its distribution.

BUSINESS OFFICE

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The next issue of the PGR will have income statistics (comparison to previous years) for the months of January through March. We continue to have strong income, but as you are all aware, we have considerable expenses right now. As we approach the spring holy days, we should continue to inspire the brethren to be planning their offerings which are so critical to the Work of God.

HOLY DAY STATISTICS

As a reminder, past issues of the PGR contain a wealth of statistical information you might find useful in preparing your offertory messages. We will offer you some additional statistics in this and coming issues of the PGR,

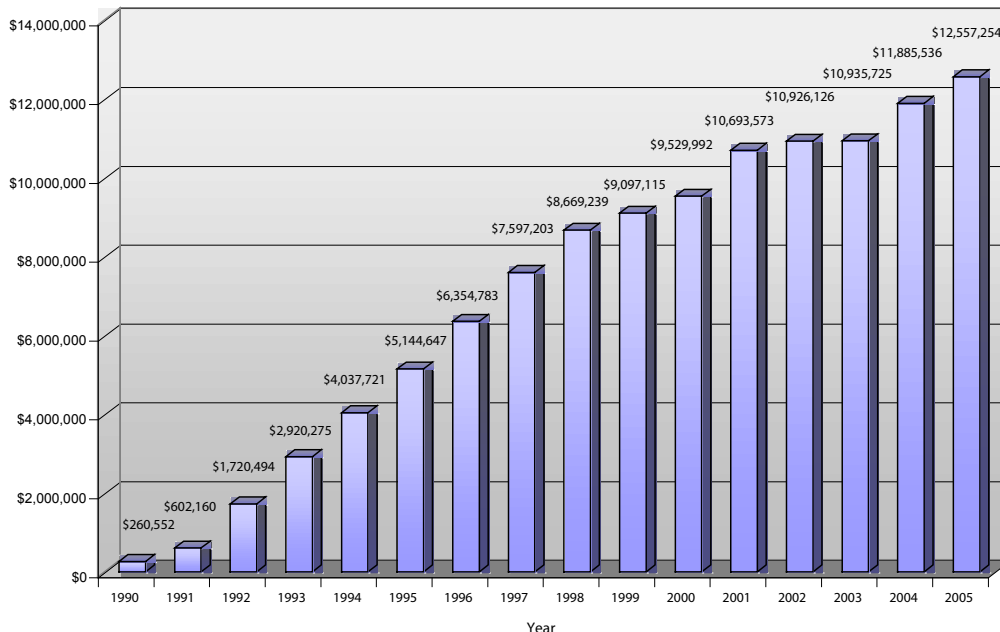
but please use other information reported in past issues to supplement your stats if you choose to use them for your messages.

FEAST PLANNER

The *Feast Planner 2006* is at the printer and will be immediately shipped directly from the printer to heads-of-households via first class mail (domestic U.S.) and airmail (international regions). We will have further announcements in the PGR to remind the brethren about relevant deadlines.

While we do not have the ministerial assignments yet, we hope to have information very soon so you may begin to make your plans.

ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION INCOME 1990-2005



AICF

CHURCH'S HUMANITARIAN ARM: NEW NAME, SAME FOUNDATION

The Philadelphia Foundation, humanitarian arm of the Philadelphia Church of God, will change its name—the final wave caused by the Church's college changing names last December. From now on, all the PCG's cultural activities will occur under the new name: Armstrong International Cultural Foundation.

With the foundation's staff comprised mostly of Herbert W. Armstrong College students, and with all its events transpiring on the AC campus, Chairman Gerald Flurry said he wanted a name that reflected the connection between the college and its cultural efforts.

The change officially went into affect at the end of April—at the close of the foundation's 2005-2006 con-

cert season. This gives foundation officials a chance not only to inform all the companies they deal with of the change, but to order materials reflecting the new name—the most drastic transformation being an overhaul of the concert series' website, where even the physical address (*www.pfconcerts.org*) must change.

As the college name change made the school's acronym (AC) the same as the institution under Mr. Herbert Armstrong, so does the foundation's new acronym: Under Mr. Armstrong, AICF stood for Ambassador International Cultural Foundation, the institution after which the PCG's AICF is patterned.

MINISTERIAL TRAINING SERIES

Points to Stress in an Offertory Message

From the September 14, 1984 Pastor Generals Report

Holy day offerings are a vital part of God's plan and contribute significantly to the work of God's Church. They style, content and delivery of the offertory message should reflect the offering's importance and show reverence for God's commandment. Yet, all too often the offering is preceded by a lackluster "It's time for another offering, so let's all turn to Deuteronomy 16:16 again."

God's commandments should not be taken casually or be made to appear as ritualistic chores. Giving an offering should be viewed as the opportunity and privilege that it is. An offering benefits the giver far more than it benefits God.

Certainly offerings *are* commanded by God, but this does not always need to be the main point in the offertory. There are many other aspects which can and should be emphasized. Here are a few examples:

- *How the offering relates to God's plan.* We are to become God. Since God is love, He is a cheerful giver. And since we are to be developing the character of God, we should learn to enjoy the opportunity to give freely and cheerfully.
- *The growth and needs of God's Church.* Show what tithes and offerings have done and will do in helping to spread the Gospel around the world. Stress teamwork and involvement.
- *Putting God First.* God gave His only Son so we could be reconciled to God and receive eternal life. Therefore, we should be willing to put God and His Work first in our lives, sacrificing as necessary.
- *The urgency of completing God's Work.* God's soon-coming Kingdom is the only hope for mankind. Christ will return *after* the Gospel has been preached to all the world.
- *God's blessings.* God is the greatest giver. He has given us everything we have. He is pleased with our generosity and will more than make up for it by blessing us in many ways.

Remember, we are to give meat in due season. When giving an offertory message, emphasize certain aspects of the offering according to the purpose of the holy day. On the Feast of Trumpets, for example, stress the urgency of completing God's end-time Work, showing how our commitment and sacrifice is needed more than ever as we look forward to Christ's soon return. During Pentecost, it would be fitting to explain how giving an offering helps us develop godly character in preparation for becoming members of God's Family.

Undoubtedly, you can think of many other lessons and points which would be relevant and stimulating. God's plan is exciting—it is *inspiring*. This is conveyed when the offertory is delivered with personality, feeling, purpose, joy and contagious excitement!

The speaker's goal should be to inspire and educate God's people, motivating them to do that which is for their benefit and for the good of God's Church. When delivered in a positive, uplifting and encouraging manner, the offertory helps God's people become more thoroughly involved in doing the most important work on Earth!