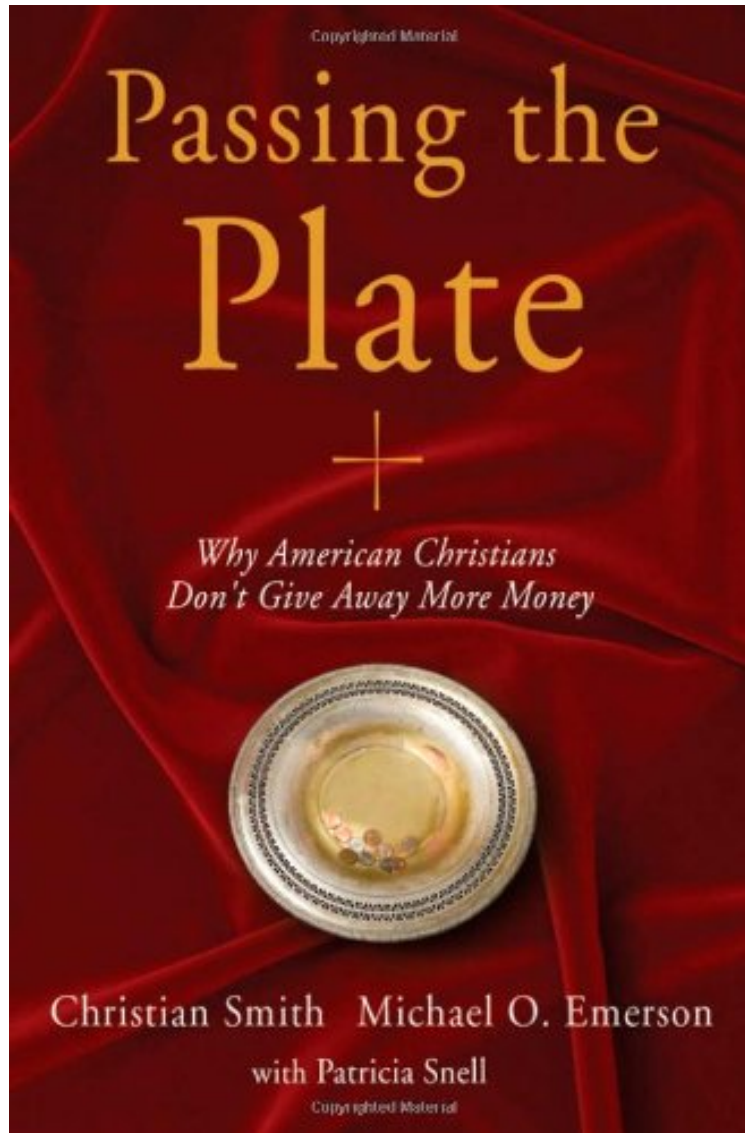


[Read free] Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money

Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money

Christian Smith, Michael O Emerson, Patricia Snell
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Christian Smith, Michael O Emerson, Patricia Snell : Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Must-Read for Pastors By Rev Casey Christian Smith has provided a helpful resource to American Christian leaders as "Passing the Plate" brings American Christian stinginess into sharp

relief. In short, American Christians CAN give a lot of money but choose not to for a variety of reasons. Smith and his cohorts report that American Christians give roughly 2% of their gross income to churches and religious charities - total! Many Christian denominations officially recommend a more generous figure for giving, ala 10%. Smith does a lot of "what if's" with that data. For example, what if American Christians all gave 10% of their income to address the concerns American Christians say they want to address? To be fair, I skimmed quite a few paragraphs that explained charts and stats in detail. The charts were by and large sufficiently explanatory, but the additional explanations are helpful for reference. Despite this necessary abundance of information, the information is extremely helpful. In chapter 3, Smith explores 9 hypotheses to explain American generosity. The interviews with pastors and parishioners in chapter 4 were also quite illuminating, if not entirely surprising. Chapter 5's "mental experiment" on tithing underscored the negative influence of American individualism on churches. There are clear practical implications for pastors and church leaders. The most significant challenge is theological: recoupling God's authority with the influence and life of the Church (cf. 171). In other words, how do Christians reconnect God with God's body (i.e. the body of Christ), the Church? Many interviewees were willing to give to God but didn't connect that sensibility with the concreteness of the Church. This book is a must for pastors seeking to create a culture of generosity to meet the needs of all God's children.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Well researched and pleasantly presented By Gourmet Chuckaroo I found the book well researched, full of useful data and information, and an easy read. Sections are summarized such that if you do not want to wade through all of the statistical details and data, you can scan the numbers and cut to the chase (conclusions and observations). High marks from this reviewer 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. For research, GOOD; for fun... Stop right now. By Joseph T. Skogmo For research, GOOD; for fun... Stop right now. I gave it four stars because the research deserves an A for effort. But this is not a fast read. If you are a pastor or a seminarian or sociologist, or researcher, get this because it is fine work. This is not, however, casual reading.

Passing the Plate shows that few American Christians donate generously to religious and charitable causes -- a parsimony that seriously undermines the work of churches and ministries. Far from the 10 percent of one's income that tithing requires, American Christians' financial giving typically amounts, by some measures, to less than one percent of annual earnings. And a startling one out of five self-identified Christians gives nothing at all. This eye-opening book explores the reasons behind such ungenerous giving, the potential world-changing benefits of greater financial giving, and what can be done to improve matters. If American Christians gave more generously, say the authors, any number of worthy projects -- from the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS to the promotion of inter-religious understanding to the upgrading of world missions -- could be funded at astounding levels. Analyzing a wide range of social surveys and government and denominational statistical datasets and drawing on in-depth interviews with Christian pastors and church members in seven different states, the book identifies a crucial set of factors that appear to depress religious financial support -- among them the powerful allure of a mass-consumerist culture and its impact on Americans' priorities, parishioners' suspicions of waste and abuse by nonprofit administrators, clergy's hesitations to boldly ask for money, and the lack of structure and routine in the way most American Christians give away money. In their conclusion, the authors suggest practical steps that clergy and lay leaders might take to counteract these tendencies and better educate their congregations about the transformative effects of generous giving. By illuminating the social and psychological forces that shape charitable giving, *Passing the Plate* is sure to spark a much-needed debate on a critical issue that is of much interest to church-goers, religious leaders, philanthropists, and social scientists.

From Publishers Weekly Why is it that Christians in the world's most affluent nation give so little of their income to charity? This sociological study, based on extensive survey data and building on prior studies of Christian philanthropy, shows that American Christian groups typically give away only 1.5% to 2% of their income. Considering that this figure is based on self-reporting, the reality is probably even less. Catholics are the worst, with many Protestant groups in the middle and Mormons (whom this study regards as "non-Christian religious believers") at the top. The first two chapters lay out the problem of Americans' ungenerous behavior, while the third ventures explanations: it's not that Americans don't have the money, but that they spend it on luxuries and fail to perceive needs outside their own circles; also, churches are vague about expectations for giving. A fourth chapter delves into parishioners' and pastors' complex feelings about giving, while a stirring conclusion lays down the gauntlet for change. Although the primary audience will be academic, any pastor who has ever had to preach a stewardship sermon should also read this book. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Superb. Urgent. Well researched but highly readable. This book is a powerful summons to use our abundance to bless others. A must-read." --Ronald J. Sider, President, Evangelicals for Social Action "Americans are, supposedly, a generous people, and religiously active Americans are supposed to be among the most generous of the generous. These stereotypes are not entirely false, but sociologists Christian Smith and Michael Emerson want to register a dissent. Their patient and diligent research explores the troubling question why American Christians do not give

MORE. Passing the Plate explores this unusually important subject with unusual depth, unusual clarity, and unusual insight." --Mark A. Noll, author of *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*"Financial giving to churches and charitable organizations has been neglected by scholarly researchers and remains poorly understood. With characteristic clarity and empirical precision, Christian Smith and Michael O. Emerson have tackled one of the thorniest aspects of American Christians' behavior. I hope church leaders will read this fine book and find ways to incorporate its insights into their thinking about church finances. Scholars of religion and nonprofit organizations will benefit from it as well." --Robert Wuthnow, author of *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*"They are clear in their presentation of their research and in the analysis of their conclusions. Seminary professors and leaders in church organizations might be well advised to read the excellent introduction first, and then pursue those chapters that present the authors' research and analysis." --Choice"I am convinced that *Passing the Plate* is urgently important for the American church. Every pastor should read it and beg God for the courage to insist that his or her congregation deal directly and systemically with this topic in an ongoing way. Every seminary professor and church leader should read it and take its lessons to heart. And every informed Christian layperson should pray over this book, asking God for a biblical understanding of stewardship and the strength to act accordingly." --Books CultureR"An outstanding work that should be read by anyone interested in Christian charitable giving. Its findings may surprise and perhaps even shock scholars and church leaders." --Sociology of Religion "This book is a stunner... Smith, Emerson, and their colleagues have done outstanding work describing and analyzing important features of American Christianity in our time." --Church History

About the Author Christian Smith is William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame. He is the coauthor, with Michael O. Emerson, of *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford, 2000), which was named the 2001 Distinguished Book of the Year by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, which won a Christianity Today Book Award in 2006. Michael O. Emerson is the Allyn R. and Gladys M. Cline Professor of Sociology and Founding Director of the Center on Race, Religion, and Urban Life at Rice University. In addition to *Divided by Faith*, his books include *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race*, coauthored with Curtiss Paul DeYoung, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. Patricia Snell is Programs and Research Specialist for the Center for the Study of Religion and Society at the University of Notre Dame.