September 15, 2019

Biblical Giving and the Responsibility of the Church

Brody Holloway

Tonight is what we would call a standalone sermon. We’ve just come out of a series on the book of Judges. We did an overview of the book of Judges. If you’re visiting with us, what we typically do is go through books of the Bible or we might do an overview of a book or a section of Scripture.

This has been a long week because I’m going to do a sermon on giving. A thousand things went through my head about six weeks ago when I started preparing for tonight because there’s such a bad taste in most of our mouths when it comes to preachers talking about money. Agreed? So, let me start by saying that I don’t get paid to do anything at Red Oak. I am on a volunteer basis only. So, if you’re visiting I want you to know that. We’re a young church. We’re a church plant but we’re a church that’s big enough that some years ago we had to start considering how we would manage money, how we would budget money, how we would spend the church’s money, understanding that we answer to God. I’ll also tell you that before I walk up on stage any time I preach, before I walk up here, I pray and I say three things pretty much every time. I say a prayer that David prayed in one of the Psalms, where he prayed that God would cover his head in the day of war. So, I ask God to cover my head in the day of war because preaching is war. Then, I read that Charles Spurgeon, on each step up to the stage of the London Tabernacle, he would ask the Holy Spirit on each step to help him, “Holy Spirit, help me; Holy Spirit, help me…” So, I pray that. Then, the third thing is that I will ask God not to kill me. It would be very embarrassing for my legacy to be that God struck me dead while I was mishandling His Word in front of you. So, I ask those three things every time I come up and tonight was no different.

It’s also interesting that recently, just in the last couple of weeks, there has been in the news a very prominent Prosperity Gospel proponent and teacher who has sort of recanted[[1]](#footnote-1). It seems like maybe he has drawn back from it. We’re not sure. We will see if that’s real. Are you guys paying attention to what’s been going on there? Some people are saying it’s real and some people are saying it’s not. It’s between him and God. I don’t have time to follow that right now. I married my daughter off yesterday so I’ve been a little busy, you know? Which, by the way, thank you to everyone who came, everyone who helped. Thanks to Matt Mustin for doing an incredible job. I got to just walk my daughter down the aisle and it was pretty awesome. Then, I got to read a letter to her and a letter to Greg. It was the most emotional moment of my life, I think, other than my own salvation, but it was great.

But, in processing how to approach this I was praying that God would give me a text because we don’t ever have to pick a text. We go through books of the Bible and the text is always whatever is coming next, so I was wrestling with this. I read a book that Miss Vicki gave me called the *Treasure Principle,* by Randy Alcorn. It was an awesome book. If you want to read about giving and stewardship, read it, it’s great.

But before I get into the text –we’re going to be in 2 Corinthians 8—here are two hopes that I have for you as your preacher and that we, as elders and pastors, have for you tonight. There are two hopes that I have that will come out of this text; what I hope will come out and what I hope will not come out. The first one is this—that believers and members of Red Oak Church will grow in confidence and in a willingness to give of their resources so that we might do more for the Gospel in reaching the nations, in reaching our community, and in seeing people come to Jesus. Here’s my second hope—I hope that non-believers, visitors, and guests will not feel a pressure to give money. In fact, I would say this. If you are a non-Christian or a non-member of Red Oak, I would ask that you not give money to this church. Here’s why—because Jesus connected the giving of money to salvation. He said that a fruit of our salvation is that we are going to want to give of what God has given us. So, I think there’s a danger when you just give money to have a false sense of security in a salvation that is not there, because salvation cannot be bought. Giving money to the church, if it provides you with anything, will provide you with a false sense of salvation and quite frankly, God doesn’t need your money, we don’t need your money, so just keep it in your pocket and enjoy whatever you can receive from coming here. We welcome you as a guest and we want you to be here. If you’re a seeker, a searcher, a non-Christian, we want you to keep coming but we don’t want you to give your money.

Giving to the work of the Lord is the responsibility of the church, its members, and its family. There’s no cost of admission. Many of you, when you first started coming to church maybe felt a sense of, “I go to the movies and I have to pay. I go to an amusement park and I have to pay. I go to the theatre or a concert and I have to pay,” so you feel a pressure. But we don’t pass a plate here. There’s a box in the back that we can put money in. So, those are the two hopes—that those of us who are part of the church would give more and those who are not part of the church, who are not members, or not Christians, that you would not give any. We don’t want you to give your money.

With that, we’re going to turn to 2 Corinthians 8 and we’re going to look at a particular group of believers, in a particular church, in a particular place called Macedonia. Now, last year we went through the book of Acts, and when we were in the book of Acts there was a point in the study, in Acts 16, where if you’re familiar with the New Testament the book of Acts tells the story of the first roughly sixty years of the Church. It’s really less than that but we see the effects of it for about sixty years. So, after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension we see several decades play out in the book of Acts. Many miraculous things happened and the Gospel went to a lot of places. A lot of people came to know Jesus. And one of the places the Gospel goes is a region called Macedonia. In Macedonia there are some cities that receive the Gospel and one of those is a city called Thessalonica. Two of the books of the Bible are letters written by Paul back to the Christians in Thessalonica. Those books are called 1 & 2 Thessalonians. We then looked at 1 Thessalonians 5 in a sermon just about a month or two ago, where we looked at a benediction from that chapter where Paul was encouraging those believers because there was a lot of persecution there. They were worried and they were saying, “We chose to follow Christ, we surrendered our lives to Jesus, and now we are waiting for Jesus to return, but all of our friends, and brothers, and loved ones are being executed, killed, martyred, and put in jail, and persecuted for the Gospel—what’s the deal? Is Jesus going to come back or is He not?” Many of them had quit their jobs because they thought, “We are Christians so now we’re just going to be swept up with the Lord to be together in Heaven.” Paul had to instruct them on how to spend their money, how to work, how to do their jobs, how to be a church, and how to function. So, that Thessalonian church was in this place called Macedonia.

With that sort of as a backdrop, we will jump into 2 Corinthians 8. It’s interesting to jump into a book in the middle of the book but that’s the backdrop to where we pick up this story.

*We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 6 Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. 7 But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.*

*8 I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*

Then, we will jump over to chapter 9 and read two verses, verses 6-7.

*The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Let us please pray and ask God’s blessing on His Word.

God, help us to understand your Word, hear your Word, preach and teach faithfully your Word, and be shaped by it. In Jesus’ name and for His sake, Amen.

There are two things that we are told about the church in Macedonia. Let me give you a little background of what is going on specifically in this part of the letter. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, which was a suburban church, a metropolitan church, and there was money. They had money and wealth in that city; it was a very prosperous city where a lot of the Christians had faced some persecution but for the most part there was some affluence. The Macedonian church, on the other hand, was very poor. Paul gives us two characteristics about the Macedonian church. One, he says that they were poor. You see that in verse 2 where He says that they gave out of their extreme poverty. He describes their poverty as extreme poverty.

If you have ever been to a third world country, what is that word? Squalid? Have you ever heard that word? It’s poverty that we can’t really wrap our brains around. There are places that we go, that you as a church pay for us to go, or where we have missionaries in other parts of the world, where the conditions, if you’ve never been there, are beyond imagination. One that I can think of is when we go to Honduras. We land in the capital city, Tegucigalpa, which is typically in the top three in the world in murder rate. So, we land there and it’s filthy, it’s dirty, there’s a lot of crime, and there’s a lot of poverty, but it’s not poverty like we know of poverty. It’s a different kind of poverty. If you’ve traveled to these places you know what we’re talking about. If you haven’t, it’s difficult to explain it. You have to fire all five senses. Do you know what I mean? You’re seeing it, you’re smelling it, you’re sort of feeling it, and you can almost taste it. There’s this smell that’s in those places that says that there’s a lack of sanitation, healthcare, and resources. Then, just outside of the capital city is the city landfill. If you go into the city landfill, there are literally hundreds, maybe thousands of people who squat and live in the city landfill, picking through the trash and that is how they eek out an existence. So, when we think of poverty we aren’t talking about, “I don’t know if my next paycheck is going to pay the bills.” We’re talking about, “I don’t know where my next meal is going to come from. I’m wearing the same clothes I’ve worn. I’m sleeping outside and trying to find something that will get me into some shelter.” That’s what we are talking about when we talk about extreme poverty.

The second thing that we know about the church in Macedonia is that they had faced poverty for a number of reasons but one of the reasons was because of persecution. They are being persecuted for their faith. When you go to a place like North Korea or Iran, what happens to Christians is that they don’t only get persecuted physically but they have everything taken away from them. So, they have to figure out how to exist with the basic essentials of living—food, shelter, and clothing—and it’s a big struggle for them because those things are taken away from them. They are put in a situation where starvation is a reality and exposure to the elements is a reality. So, the Macedonian church was like that.

The Corinthian church on the other hand was like us. Folks had a bed to sleep in, folks had food, if you didn’t have any food and you were absolutely broke and poor then there were soup kitchens and opportunities to find food. There was something like a welfare or healthcare system in place so that people could get their basic needs met. In fact, in Corinth was what we would probably consider upper middle class. This would be like us receiving a letter from our missionaries saying, “Hey, there is this special opportunity to give. We are going to give to the needs of the church in Jerusalem, which is also a church that has struggled, and let me encourage you before I tell you of your resources. Let me encourage you with what the church at Macedonia has done. The church at Macedonia is persecuted and they are in extreme poverty and they have given generously and out of not their abundance but out of their deprivation and poverty. They’ve given more than you can even imagine, so let me encourage you to give.” That’s what Paul was saying to the Corinthians. So, the Macedonian church gave generously, but not only generously but with joy, and cheerfulness, and we might even say with thanksgiving, because they were thankful to get to take part in giving.

Now, when we give we are giving to the work of the Lord and we know that Jesus doesn’t need our money, He doesn’t need our talents, and He doesn’t need our resources. He’s used a lot of different means through history to speak to people and to tell them to take the Gospel places and to reach people. Remember that story where God literally opens the mouth of a donkey and the donkey starts talking? God can do whatever He wants to do to communicate what He needs to communicate and to achieve His purposes. In fact, more than one writer points to that in Scripture. “I know that no one can thwart your plans...I know that you need no one’s permission…I know that you do whatever you please.” God does whatever He pleases. So, we don’t give because God depends on our giving to accomplish His work. Do you hear that Red Oak? Your giving and my giving does not complete the work. The work is going to be completed. But what it does is it interfaces us as a church and us as individuals with the work that Jesus has determined and promised to complete; the work of reaching the nations with the Gospel. There’s a scene in the book of Revelation where people from every tribe, tongue, and nation are around the throne of God worshipping Jesus. How does that happen? Because the Gospel goes to all of those nations. The Gospel is not at those nations now but it’s going to go to those nations because Jesus told us it is going to. So, what giving at the local church level does is it enables us to get to take part in that. We get to take part in it. We get to be a part of the greater work of the Gospel going forth to the ends of the Earth. So, Paul is challenging the Corinthian church with the Macedonians’ example.

Now, our key verse is 8:9, where he holds up the greatest example of what giving looks like, and he says,

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich…*

Was Jesus rich? What do you think he means when he says that Jesus was rich? Sinless, untouched by sin, untainted by the depravity of the world, enthroned in Heaven, surrounded by angelic beings like the cherubim and the seraphim, these creatures in Scripture that cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy.” In Isaiah 6, they won’t even approach Him but they won’t run away from Him. His glory draws them but they cover their faces and they cover themselves when they come into His presence. They cry, “Holy, Holy, Holy”—beings who have only ever been faithful to Jesus worship Him day and night. Jesus is not needy. God is not needy for our worship even.

Little, and I, and the kids, as a family this morning we watched a documentary about this farm. Maybe you’ve seen it. It’s called *The Biggest Little Farm*.[[2]](#footnote-2) Have any of you seen that documentary? It’s fascinating. Something struck me in the middle of it. The story is about a family that decides that they want to start a farm that’s self-sustained and where all of the resources on the farm are contained within the farm. Everything is biodegradable. They put owl boxes on the barn so that the owls will kill the gophers so that the gophers will quit killing the fruit trees. They bring in the right habitat for hawks so that the hawks will kill the birds that are eating the apricots. Then they take all the manure and come up with a system where they irrigate with manure in the irrigation system. You watch this documentary and it looks like they literally create Eden. They do these aerial views and it goes from being like a desert landscape to being like Eden. I thought, “I know what they’re doing—it is in the heart of man to desire to find something like what God originally created for us to experience.” These people don’t know Jesus. They don’t know the Gospel. They think they’re trying to help the ecosystem. They don’t get it but there’s this longing. We think of Heaven, and we think of Eden, and we think of what God is preparing us for, and giving enables us as a church and as individuals to take part in building that and getting people there. That’s what it does.

So, when Paul writes verse 9 he is saying that the greatest example is that Jesus left that—He already had that and He left it—and He made himself poor. Not only did Jesus come into the world but He came at a time when everybody was poor. Then He was the lowest and the poorest of the poor and for our sake He did that. For our sake He went hungry. For our sake He experienced pain. For our sake He faced temptation. He sacrificed at a level that we can’t understand. We cannot understand it. It was sacrifice with zero self-preservation, yet He preserved His holiness, He preserved His glory, and in the sacrifice He gave everything of himself and still maintained His perfection, His glory, and His righteousness. That’s the example of giving that we’ve been given.

This text is so beautiful and so powerful and it’s meant so much over the last six weeks as I’ve dug into it, and read it, and studied it, especially over the last week. It’s a wonderful text. It’s really chapters 8-9 that are sort of laying out these ideas. But I want to look, just in these nine verses, at five lies that I want us to consider that most of us at one time or another have believed when it comes to giving. Five lies that one, or two, or three, or all five of them we believed at one time or another.

Lie number one—I am too poor to give or I don’t have enough to give. It’s easy to convince myself that I cannot give. I have bills that are adding up. I don’t have enough money at the end of the month to get by. I think there’s a misconception and wrong understanding of the biblical teaching on giving that says that giving is something I should do if I have enough left over after paying for all my other bills and maybe wants. The reality is that I should give before I pay anything else. The Bible uses the teaching of firstfruits in the Old Testament. This was when God would have Israel give as an offering the firstfruits of their crops. In doing this, what we are saying is that the most important portion of our resources goes to the Lord. This is an act of faith and trust that God will use the gift and then provide for me. So, the lie that many of us have bought into at times, and maybe you’re living in it right now, is that, “I want to give to the work of missions but we just don’t have enough money. We can’t make ends meet. We’re hitting the credit card before the end of the month.” I feel that. That’s hard. That’s difficult. So, I think it’s critical that we take that principle and idea of firstfruits and one of the things that we do is we give off the top, not off the bottom. We give off the top, not off the bottom. It’s not about the amount and we will get to that in a minute. Then, we might need to make adjustments in our lives so that other things go and so that can stay. The application is to give to the Lord and the work of advancing the Gospel and the ministering of the needs of others at the first of each month or each paycheck before any other bills. I need to have commitment to give like the Macedonians gave. They literally gave beyond their means.

Lie number two—is that there is a formula or percentage that I’m supposed to follow when I give. This comes from hearing, like when I was a kid, that you have to give 10%. Have you ever heard that? 10%. What do we call that? It starts with a ‘t’. Tithe. That’s an Old Testament teaching, not a New Testament teaching. Some people will argue that, but when you systematically look at Matthew through Revelation, when giving is talked about it’s always words like ‘abundance,’ and ‘generosity,’ and ‘from the heart,’ and with ‘joy,’ and ‘thanksgiving.’ So, lie number two is that you have to have a certain percentage that you give and that is a requirement. Where we get into trouble there is that firstly, the 10% tithe was one portion of one particular offering that God collected from Israel. There were other ways that God called them to give. So, you’re not required to give 10%. That’s not what the Scripture teaches. Jesus will say things like, “We should give out of the abundance of our heart…We should give joyfully.” We saw there in chapter 9 that God loves a cheerful giver. So, the application is that in the very next chapter that God says that. Paul writes that God loves a cheerful giver. Then, in verse 9, the example that’s been set for us by Christ is that we give as much as we can give. Jesus gave His all for me.

Lie number three—is that other people will give so I don’t really need to because my gift wouldn’t make much of a difference anyway. “That other dude is giving $100 and I can only give $3. What’s it even matter. The church’s budget can pay the bills. I’m not even going to bother.” That’s lie number three. Do you think God is impressed by the dude that gives a million bucks more than the person that gives one dollar? Of course not. It doesn’t have anything to do with the amount. You know that, right? It doesn’t have anything to do with the amount. It has zero to do with the amount. It is the condition of the heart. Do you remember Jesus telling the story where this lady gives just a little bit of pocket change because it’s all that she has? Remember that. Then, there’s a very religious person who puts his gift on display and Jesus is like, “That lady right there—that’s the gift I accept. That’s the gift I’m going to build the kingdom with.”

There’s a lie that people believe, “I don’t have enough to give so what does it even matter? My offering is not going to make a difference.” But giving is an act of worship. Again, God doesn’t need our money. I’ll be honest with you again—Red Oak doesn’t need our money. Have you ever looked at our budget? It’s a joke if you compare it to other churches. All of your money goes to advance the Gospel. It is wonderful. It is glorious to be a part of a church where nobody is padding their pockets and nobody is fleecing the flock. It’s awesome. And it doesn’t make us better than other churches—we are in a unique situation as a church plant that has a free building to meet in and that forces us to meet on Sunday evenings because the building gets used on Sunday mornings. But that means we get to sleep in and then lay around until the football games start. Praise Jesus that it’s football season. It’s glorious. It’s still hot as the equator. This is the hottest September—it’s not supposed to be this hot but it’s going to be cool soon, and the leaves are going to turn, and we are watching football. I’m watching my boy crack people’s faces on Friday nights and it’s glorious. We go to a church where we just stroll in on Sunday evenings. I wore a collared shirt for the first time in nine months, probably. I tucked it in. How casual can you get? We’ve got coffee by the gallons back there. You stroll in here and you’ve got it made, Red Oak. The seats are soft. The temperature is controlled. Life is good at Red Oak on Sundays and it’s easy to get complacent and think, “My offering doesn’t really matter. We’re meeting the needs. We’re taking care of our people in other parts of the world and ministry is getting done locally.” We’ve got to give to advance the work and advance the kingdom. In fact, what it should do is that that confidence should unlock our willingness to give in abundance. I’ll be honest. The challenge for most of us is that we are not giving as the Macedonians gave. We are probably giving like the Corinthians were giving. The Bible teaches us that God does not consider the amount of the gift but the heart and attitude of the giver.

I don’t know anything about the stock market. I know that you give some money and if you do it right then you get more money back. That’s called ROI, Return On Investment. So, I did a little math. If you bought some Apple stock, not early, early on, but like in 2002, the number of times that it would have split and multiplied, I think the stat that I looked at said that either $100 or $1000 of Apple stock in 2002 would right now be worth $119,000, and we are all kicking ourselves. “What was I thinking?” I remember that Zach Mabry had a little Apple sticker on the back of his Toyota truck. I thought it was the dumbest sticker I’d ever seen in my life. What I should have done is said, “Tell me about that. I’m going to buy some of that. I’m going to spend $100.” Right? It’s an investment. It’s a return on investment. Well, here’s what the Bible teaches us; there’s a principle that Scripture teaches that you reap what you sow. It’s called the Law of the Harvest or the principle of the harvest. If you put soybeans in the ground down here on the Wood’s farm, guess what? The corn is growing on the fields where they planted corn and the soybean is growing on the fields where they planted soybeans. What you plant is what you’re going to reap. So, the Scripture teaches that when we give to the advance of the kingdom that we’re investing in the building of the kingdom.

Lie number four—is my money will be wasted or used frivolously or to line the pockets of wealthy pastors. Throughout history there has been a pattern of this and sadly it’s happening today, isn’t it? There’s a reason people think that way. This isn’t new, by the way. This isn’t 21st century stuff, it’s not even 20th century stuff. In the first church, Paul writes against it and Peter writes against it. People were profiting off of this. They saw the rise of Christianity and the Gospel advancing. In fact, by the 4th century the Roman king literally converted the entire Roman Empire to Christianity? Why do we think he did that? Have you studied the history behind that? Because it was profitable. For three centuries they tried to squash it—Caesar after Caesar, and emperor after emperor, and king after king. The harder you squeeze Christianity the more she grows. Persecution will never stop the Church of Jesus Christ. It will only advance her. So, what happens is that Constantine was going to convert everyone to Christianity and make some money off of it. They started making money off of it.

In 2017, we spent October going through the Five Solas of the Reformation[[3]](#footnote-3). In the 1400s, and 1500s, and into the 1600s, the Protestant Reformation triggered a rebellion against the Church that had grown to a point where it had profited off of the people by taking their money and convincing them that unless they gave money they could not get to Heaven. That’s not what the Bible teaches. So, guys robbing people with fear tactics and lies, like, “If you give me $100 and sow into it, you’ll get $1000 back. God will bless you.” The Bible doesn’t teach that. The Bible teaches that if you give $100, if that’s what God has spurred you to give, that’s between you and Jesus.

I do not, nor will I ever, look at the records of what people give in this church. I have no idea. I’ve never done that. Some of you are like, “Good, but I give cash because I don’t want anyone to know what I’m giving.” Nobody looks. We have a couple of guys who keep the books and put it in the bank and whatever they know they know but they don’t pay any attention to that. I don’t know. When people walk through the doors, I don’t know who’s giving and who’s not—that’s between you and the Lord.

Let me explain some of the ways that a healthy church protects against lie number four; lie number four being, “My money will be wasted and used frivolously or to line the pockets of wealthy pastors.” Here’s the way a church protects against this:

1. Plurality of leaders. We don’t have one pastor, we have five, in a church of less than 150 people. That’s called plural and diverse leadership. There’s accountability. No man gets to make decisions; there’s a panel of five. And there are that many more plus deacons.
2. The second way that the church protects against this is open books and zero secrets. Open books and zero secrets. Anybody in here can see what every dime gets spent on. There are no secrets.
3. The third way is that there is accountability for the use of church resources.
4. There’s a strong plan that allocates money toward advancing the Gospel, giving to the needs of the impoverished, and widowed, and orphaned, and building churches in places of need.
5. Lastly, there is a missional strategy both here and foreign.

We’re not just collecting money and figuring out what we’re going to do with it.

Let me throw some numbers at you. The average monthly income of Red Oak Church is $10,600. So, that’s $120,000 a year, or $125,000, something like that. I’m just going to be honest with you—a church our size should probably double that. And what a freedom to know that nobody is getting that money. It’s not going in my bank account or to anybody else here. It is tightly monitored.

In Northern India, in the region where we are working—many of you know where that is and what that’s all about—in 2013, when we targeted that people group, we went in there and knew of one believer and now we know of over twenty who have been baptized. How much money has Red Oak spent in those six or seven years? I don’t even know. There have been some years where we’ve spent $40,000-50,000 to get teams over there and to get to those regions and pull people into the discipleship training, and over 20 people have come to faith in Jesus. That is no longer an unengaged people group. That’s how we spend our money.

Pinwheel Tutoring is reaching families in three communities and is opening doors for us to go into homes. I have a picture on my phone of my girls picking lice out of the hair of little girls who have been displaced out of family situations, at three in the morning on a school night, trying to fix what is broken in their lives through the love of Jesus. Guess what? It takes money to do that stuff and we know where our money gets spent.

There’s accountability and a plan. Last year we spent several thousand dollars because the schools in Cherokee County (apparently Graham County, Clay, and Swain did a better job of managing their money) came to us, Red Oak, and asked us if we could lead an initiative to help feed the middle school students in this county because there’s a shortage. This church gave several thousand dollars and those kids got fed. We know where the money goes. It goes to the Helmses, Greg and Kilby Helms, and the Bozemans. We know what Gar and Kimberly are going to do and there’s no ambiguity about that. We know what they’re going to do in Togo. We know what we’re going to do. Gulzar and many short-term people.

The application is that the principle of biblical giving that Jesus laid down for us is that if we are truly in Christ that we will give but also we are coming into a working that He is doing to build a kingdom. That is the treasure principle. By this principle, we can see our giving as a return on investment that will never fade away.

Lie number five—is that people believe that giving is a burden. “It’s a burden to give. It’s hard to give. I dread giving.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-7,

*The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

This is a promise from Scripture. I want you to think—pride laid aside right now—this is not truth or dare, we’re in church so let’s tell the truth. Raise your hand if you ever got taken or sucked in by one of those multi-level marketing pyramid things. My hand is up. They got me. They got us and the Joneses at the same time. Aw, man. It’s because I trust the dude that told me. He wasn’t lying to me; he believed it. Somewhere down the line somebody lied to somebody and a bunch of people started believing it. What if I showed up after church and I came up to you, “Hey, man, I’ve got this great new investment deal. I need ten partners to each give me $1000….” What are you going to do? “Yeah, yeah, I’ll call you,” and what are you going to do? You are not coming back to this church or if you do you’re going to watch for the preacher that’s the baldheaded guy up front, right? That’s going to be confusing because there are a bunch of us. But what if I said to you, “I got in this really cool DeLorean and traveled forward in time”? Time travel. I traveled just far enough forward to where I came back and I said, “I have an investment opportunity for you and I can show you through time travel that if you will invest $100 into this thing it’s going to produce $100,000.” Better yet, what if I went to Eddie Wood and said, “Eddie, it’s April and you’re getting ready to plant soybeans and corn. I know for a fact that all of the Midwest, the Upper Midwest, and through the heartland is going to be in a drought this year, but I’ve seen the future and we’re going to have the perfect balance of rain, sun, heat, and cool, and we are going to have a bumper crop. And what’s going to be in demand is soybeans.” Do you know what he would do? He’d sell all his cows and he would plant every field he has in soybeans, no corn, and he would invest in that if he knew for a fact what it was going to do. Do you think that would be drudgery to him if he knew 100%? I’m not talking about if he was wondering but I’m talking about, “I know that I know—if I do this I’m going to be a rich man come October.” He would do it willfully, joyfully, and gladly.

Giving is not a burden when it comes to advancing the kingdom. What if we could go back to 2012 and know that our money was going to reach 46 unbelievers who were going to come to faith in Jesus in the darkest places of the planet? We gave anyway. But what if right now we are sitting on the edge of looking into the future and knowing that, as a church, God is going to do more? It’s something to think about. So, lie number five is that giving is a burden.

The conclusion is this. We rarely talk about money here at Red Oak. I’ve thought about it and I’m pretty sure that in Red Oak’s six to seven year existence that we’ve never done a sermon on giving, ever. And tonight there’s not a challenge and we’re not going to give a card out and say, “Hey, pledge this much.” Let’s let the Word of God speak and let’s search our hearts individually. What goes on after this sermon is between you and Jesus. I don’t know what you’re going to do but I want you to go back to those five things and know that you can give of your resources if you’re a Christian. Again, if you’re not a Christian we don’t want you to give. But let’s reach more people. Let’s get a bigger light that pushes farther into the darkness. To do that is going to take money. We have people in this church who are on the mission field who when they come home for their furlough they have to spend most of their time traveling and raising support. I think we could cut down on the time they spend doing that if we’re just in a position where we can give. Let’s be like Macedonia and let’s do it joyfully. God loves a cheerful giver. God loves a cheerful giver.

Let’s pray.

*Lord, it was a hard sermon and a hard thing to talk about. Thank you that you’re only making me do it this one time for now. We’re going to start to study the book of Ruth and we’re excited about that. God, I pray that this church would be a church that reflects the principle of giving, that when we give abundantly for the work and the advance of the Gospel that you will bless that and use that. It’s not about the money; it’s about the heart of the giver and the church. And for those who have never been taught that we’re to give, God, I pray that for those who are Christians—I had a conversation with a young couple recently who didn’t know, they never knew they were supposed to give. They thought that was for people who had extra money. I pray that we would be a church that’s on mission to give. I thank you for the generosity of this church to this point, God. I don’t know—as hard as this could be received, I can say before you that I’ve never been a part of a church that has given the way that this church has given; to Gulzar, to the Werth’s during Ava’s illness and death, to fly them from one continent to another to help with medical treatment and get them back here so that we could bury their child properly. God, you’ve done great things through the hearts and gifts of these people, to fund the trainings that we’ve done in India, Central Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Central America. Thank you for a giving church. The problem is not that we don’t give but when we read this text, Lord, we want to learn from the Macedonians and we want to give beyond what is easy to give. So, help us to do that, believing, trusting, and knowing that you’re going to multiply the gifts that we give for your sake and your kingdom as you grow what you intend to grow. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.*

1. On September 9, 2019, The Christian Post reported, “Declaring that the “Holy Ghost is just fed up with it,” controversial televangelist Benny Hinn, formerly one of the most aggressive proponents of the prosperity gospel, … delivered a …rejection of the practice that made him and his family millions.” Other media sources are reporting similar news while different sources are calling for caution in believing this to be a true conversion from the prosperity gospel. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Per DVD.com, “The Biggest Little Farm chronicles the eight-year quest of John and Molly Chester as they trade city living for 200 acres of barren farmland and a dream to harvest in harmony with nature.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Per Christianity.com, “The Five Solas are five Latin phrases (or slogans) that emerged during the Reformation to summarize the Reformers’ theological convictions about the essentials of Christianity.” The Five Solas are: Sola Scriptura (“Scripture alone”): The Bible alone is our highest authority. Sola Fide (“faith alone”): We are saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Sola Gratia (“grace alone”): We are saved by the grace of God alone. Solus Christus (“Christ alone”): Jesus Christ alone is our Lord, Savior, and King. Soli Deo Gloria (“to the glory of God alone”). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)