

All right, well, good morning again. It's  
good to see you all here this morning. I  
don't remember if I said it before. If  
anyone here does not know me, my name is  
Seth Green. I'm the lead pastor here and  
I'll Ave. Baptist Church, welcome. We're  
so glad that you were able to join us  
with to worship this morning. Yep, I  
gotta have the pulpit today because I  
have so many notes and verses and stats  
and things like that. And it was a busy  
week. I was like, I can't, can't remember  
all this so. I don't like  
this thing, but I'm going to use it when  
I need to. Hey, before I forget, Harry  
was kind enough to remind me. I forgot to  
say during the announcements. I know a  
lot of e-mail communication went out this  
week, but if anyone is not tracking,  
Phyllis's funeral is on Tuesday. And so  
with the times we're in there and I just  
want to make sure I mention that. So  
Harry, thank you for letting me know. All  
right, well, this week we are going to do

a one week standalone sermon series and  
we are going to talk about everybody's  
favorite topic. This is why you come here  
on Sundays. We're going to talk about  
money. We're going to talk about money,  
We're going to talk about finances. Now,  
as I say that some of you may be like.

Why? Like why? Why do we have to talk  
about this? I don't like this topic. It  
makes me uncomfortable. How come we have  
to talk about it at church? And that's a  
really good question. And there's several

reasons why it's so important that we  
discussed this not just once, but

multiple times throughout the year. So  
let me walk through those real quick. The

first reason is because it is January.

And therefore, it's a really good time to  
talk about this together as a church. I

know everybody has a different schedule.

I know for myself, I'm in charge of the  
finances at my house. I do a little bit  
of moving around, double checking things.

I reset my tithe at the beginning of

January. It's just a natural time to do that. The second reason is it allows me as your pastor. To keep you all informed. So for those that this for those of you that are members of this church, you know that in all Ave. Baptist Church is very open about its finances. In fact, if you are a member here, you came to the last business meeting and during that meeting we walked through the whole budget together. So if you ever wonder where's the money going? Let's go to one of those meetings. They are thrilling. You'll enjoy every minute of them. We go through the budget and the budget doesn't pass until the church members give the OK and say yes, this is we vote this and this is a go. These type of updates allow me and I think it's important to keep you all updated on where we are with things. And then third, and this is by far the most important reason. Although the other two reasons were important as well. The reason that we're talking about this is

because of who we are as a church,  
who we are as a church. Now we  
have a mission statement as a church.  
It's our purpose. We are apprentices of  
Jesus. That's who we are. And what do  
we do? We do the exact same  
thing Jesus did. We bring God's Kingdom  
where? To the place he gave us  
to our area of responsibility, Prairie  
Village Mission Overland Park. We are  
apprentices of Jesus doing our job  
bringing God's Kingdom to our community.

And let me tell you this friends.

Finances, money, wealth, possessions,  
everything in that area is  
a massive part of being  
an apprentice of Jesus.

It is a huge part of it.

91

00:03:24,1000 --> 00:03:27,753  
15 percent, 15% of everything that

Jesus said that's recorded in the  
Gospels is on those topics. Money,  
wealth, finances, possessions, all of it.  
So if you were following Jesus

around during his earthly ministry, you'd

be like, this is all this

guy. Talks about like 15% of the

time he's bringing it up. If you

go through scripture there are over 2300

verses addressing those money, wealth,

finances, possessions, how we see them,

how we use them, how we feel

about them. 2300 verses. That's

more versus the amount of verses on

prayer and faith combined.

Now, why do you think the

Scripture talks about this topic so

much? Here's why. Because how we

use the financial resources that God

has entrusted to us is a

direct reflection of what's going on

in our hearts.

How we use together as a church and

how you use individually the financial

resources that God has entrusted to you

is a direct reflection of what's going on

in your heart and in our heart

collectively as a church. Like if you

want to find out what's really important  
to somebody and you had total access to  
their lives. All you got to do and you'll  
be like 90% of the way there is look at  
how they spend their money and how they  
spend their free time and you're gonna  
answer that question real fast. So Jesus  
keeps bringing it up because it's a big  
part of human existence. Like you can't  
live in this world without dealing with  
these things. And it's a direct  
reflection of what's going on in our  
hearts. Now, I'll just say this, and this  
is a personal note for me. I like  
talking about this stuff. Like I look  
forward to conversations. Like this, I  
will never understand pastor to like I  
don't talk about money. I'm like really  
you must skip a lot of verses in the  
Bible because it's there all the time. I  
enjoy this. I spent years as a financial  
advisor and then helping people have a  
good healthy relationship with the money  
that God has entrusted to them is one of

the greatest things you can do for

somebody. It is definitely an area of.

Industry, I didn't say that at the time.

So we've gotten fired, but I knew deep

down what was actually going on. So it's

important that we have these

conversations. So here's what we're going

to do today. We're going to spend a

little bit of time, just a few minutes,

and I don't have a bunch of slides or

anything, but I want to give you a quick

overview of how we ended 2020. 5 As the

church specifically with our giving and

just our big picture finances, we're

gonna talk about that and then we're

gonna move into what Scripture has to say

about this topic. And part of the reason

I need my notes is that there's so much

to say. It's just like, you know, I have

to feel my pain. How hard it is to wade

through and decide what to keep and what

not to. What to get rid of, But we're

going to see what does Scripture have to

say about this topic. And then I'm going

to end with a challenge for you all. So let's go ahead and get into it. I don't have, again, I don't have a bunch of slides or anything like that, but I don't think they're necessary this week. Let's start with a brief review of how we ended last year. Now, I did a multiple.

Multiple week series on this topic, Money, wealth, possessions. At the end of 2024, November of 2024, if I believe. And I went back and I was looking at my notes from that sermon series and I was reminded that I gave the church a challenge during that time. Some of you might remember this, some of you might not, but we went through, I think it was a three-week series. On this, and I ended with the challenge, I said my challenge to you and all Ave. Baptist Church is that we give 100% of the 2025 budget, which was met with smiles and Pats on the shoulder. And that's a good challenge, Pastor. So I think it happened, but good for you, you know, wait to step up there

and take a risk. But you know what?

God was good, and we met that goal.

Yep. So I'll just let you know. Yep,

absolutely.

I'll just break it down by two numbers.

Our budget was about 800, just under

895,000. The percent of budget that was

given just through regular ties and

offerings was 92%, which is a great way

to end the year. But on top of

that, we had David. Nita Tomlinson, who

are just absolutely wonderful long term

members of this church and they both

passed away and they left their home to

the church. And so that house was sold.

That was sold for \$150,000. So that was

added to our regular giving and that

brought our budget up to 109% of the

giving that was done so. That 150,000,

that's a one time gift. That's not

something that myself or anyone else on

the finance side of the church counts on

coming in regularly. And yet it is an

example of how God sees our hearts, He

sees our efforts, and God is more than capable of providing. So that is really, really good news. There's more good news as I went through the numbers. Is that our church has some incredibly generous and faithful givers. Now, I do not know who gives what. So if you see me making eye contact with you, it's not because I'm subtly trying to communicate something. I don't know who gives what unless you told me. I know what I give. I know a couple people have talked to me about, but I have those numbers are not for my eyes, but. I do know just the percentages breakdown. So we have some incredibly generous faithful givers in the church. And my guess is a lot of you who have been at this church for a long time, many years, you've been giving faithfully that entire time. But that brings us to the bad news. I won't say bad news. We'll just say room for improvement. The news there's a good HR way to say here's some room for

improvement. Those faithful givers, of which we have many that are giving consistently and they're giving a pretty good sum. They're doing the vast majority of the churches giving. So we have some wonderful faithful givers who have been giving to this church for a long time, but they're doing the vast majority of the churches. Living. Here's what I mean by that. In your typical church, you're going to hear the 8020 rule and the 8020 rule, unfortunately. Not always unfortunately, but it applies to a lot of areas of life. The 8020 rule and giving. Almost every pastor knows this rule is that typically 20% of your people are doing 80% of the financial lifting of the church. Give me my water please Hun. I got this cold I'm working through and this won't end well without it. Thankyou. So the 8020 rule is 20% of your givers. Are doing 80% of the giving that the church is depending on. Now the good news church is

that we're not quite that that bad off.

That's, that's not a healthy place. I

know it's reality, but it's not

financially healthy. We are doing a

little bit better than that. We have

about 33% of our givers giving about 76%.

Of the total, so of the giving

units, about 33% of those giving units

are doing 76% of the financial lifting

here in Albany Baptist Church and that's

excluding that \$150,000 gift. So we're

doing better maybe than some other

churches, but what I want to see

and what a healthy picture. Is to see

those numbers continue to change over

time where it's just getting closer and

closer to it's a more even spread. And a

lot of times what that means. And I don't

want all communicate this through the

sermon. This is not me coming to you and

saying, hey, you have been faithfully

giving. I just need you to do more and

more and more. We'll even talk about

percentages at the end of this sermon.

But rather it's those who are. You're learning about giving to step up and say, alright, this is an area that I'm going to learn to be faithful in in my life.

I'm very aware as a pastor that not everybody has a good example when it comes to generosity. I was really blessed. My parents who are here, they just set the example. I always saw them give. And once I saw the amount on the check they were writing and in my little mind, I was like, it's a mind-blowing amount of money. But they were very generous. And I think for me and all my siblings, it's just been, we just expect it. It's like, that's just part of life, man. That's what you do. But that's not the case if you weren't given that example. And so that's where I depend upon especially you all in the older generation to show that good example. To others who may not even know that giving us such a big part of the Christian life and we're going to talk about that here

in just a moment. Alright, last thing to end on, and I gotta keep rolling. This is the great news. The great news is that we have more money in reserves. Just kind of like hanging out looking at us.

Thankfully, bearing some interest, we have more money in reserves now than at anytime in the last five years. We can give a round of applause for that as well.

So I have the numbers pulled. I've double checked them. I triple checked them. I got a second opinion on them. Even after the kids hallway remodel, even after that massive plumbing fix that was just such a pleasure to work through, pulling up 180 feet of pipe and having it relined and everything because we had sewage leaking to the kids hallway. Even after the whole kids. For your model, the plumbing fix, we still church. We have more money now in reserves than anytime in the last five years. In fact, we have so much money in reserves, we have hundreds of thousands

of dollars, even above the amount that we would normally keep as a cushion, like just in case it all goes South, we got to have or I have a massive, you know, building problem. There's still money on top of that. Now, here's my point in saying that, and then I'm gonna move on.

God has obviously been very, very faithful to our church. But when I give to the church, and I know when you all give to the church, I give for a reason.

It's not so I can see a big number staring at me on the screen. I give so it can be invested back into the Kingdom of God. So as we move through into 2026, you're going to see myself, I talked to the deacons about it this morning, myself, probably some members of the senior leadership team, the deacons, and just different people in the church coming around and talking about some ideas. We have to invest that money back into God's Kingdom. And some of that is even projects just in the building. This

building is a tool. That's all it is.

This building is not in All Ave. Baptist

Church. The people are in All Ave.

Baptist Church. This building is a tool.

It's a very powerful tool and it's one

that God's given us and we want to use it

to its fullest potential so that we can

bring God's Kingdom to our community,

which a lot of times means having you be

a place that we can welcome the

community. Into that can be used to its

fullest potential. All right, so more on

that to follow, but God's been very

generous with us. We have very nice.

We're we're in a good financial position

and I think the big turning point coming

into this new year is great. Now let's

invest it and let's use it in a wise

way to do what we're here to do. The

apprentices of Jesus and bring his

Kingdom to this community. Alright, so

let's go and keep rolling.

And let's get into the more scriptural

portion of the message.

Some of you might hear me  
quote those stats and think to  
yourself. That's fantastic. Like that's  
good news. I'm glad the church ended  
well. I'm really glad we have a good  
amount of money in reserves, but.

Sounds like I don't really need to give,  
you know, good to go. Sounds like  
everything's taken care of. Or some of  
you may hear me say that and think to  
yourself, hey man, I do give. Like I'm  
generous with the monies God's given me.

I just don't give to the church. I mean,  
there are a lot of really wonderful  
501-C3 organizations out there, and I  
already give to them. So I don't really  
understand why the church is any more  
important than any other nonprofit out  
there. Now, if you're thinking that  
question, and I thought that question  
many times myself, and I'm grateful for  
the mentors I've had that have come along  
and helped me understand this  
scripturally. If you're thinking that

question or some variation of it, let me just assure you that's a really good question. It's a really good question and it's a question that we're going to have to answer, so let's go ahead and talk about it together. Let me start with this. What does God through Scripture have to say about giving to the local church, not other organizations, but specifically the church? What does God through Scripture have to say? We're going to take a look at that. But before I get into it, let me just assure you, because I've had these conversations before, if you're feeling much attention in your shoulders, you can just relax. You can relax a little bit. Everything that we're going to talk about is going to be very life giving. Folks. Listen to me. The biblical view of money and finances and. Possessions and wealth is absolutely nothing to shy away from and if you have shy away from it cause you're like I don't want to talk about it, I

would encourage you to change that. Let me assure you, God, your heavenly Father is not up in heaven right now looking down and just being like I hope they're miserable and poor. That's what I'm going for. No matter how much they give, it's not enough. They should be guilt ridden to give more and more. They're not allowed to take any vacations. Anyone who has more than \$100 in their bank account is greedy. He's not saying any of that stuff. That's ridiculous. Think about it, when you come to any scriptural teaching, what is it? And it doesn't have to be about this topic. It could be about human sexuality, marriage, thoughts, you name it. What God your father, my father through scriptures telling us is he's saying, hey, this is the absolute best possible way to live in the midst of a fallen, broken, sin filled world. This is the best possible way to live and if you have met people. And I have

met many who have an unhealthy  
relationship with the funds that God has  
given them, whether they give him credit  
or not. You don't want to be those  
people. It's not good. Have you ever met  
somebody who's just greedy and miserly  
and they're, let's not point fingers  
here. That's not helpful. Now you've met  
somebody who's like greedy and. Is  
really. And they don't, you know, they,  
you know, you split the check and they're  
like, ohh, I guess you owe me a nickel.  
It's like, ohh, my word, man, here's your  
nickel. And that's the last time I go out  
to lunch with you. Met someone like that.  
It's awful. That's just, it's no way to  
live. You ever met somebody who has  
no control over their spending? That's an  
addiction I've never had and I don't ever  
want to have. Like, that is a special  
type of hell on earth when you're just in  
constant debt and you can't control your  
spending. There's an interesting  
phenomenon going on right now amongst the

baby boomer generations, because  
generations, there's only one generation  
for baby boomers. They're retiring and  
they've had it so drilled into them like  
save, save, save, save, save, save,  
save, save. Now they're getting to  
retirement and all the financial advisors  
are finding out they won't spend the  
money they save for retirement. And so  
they're just working themselves late into  
life and being miserable about it. And  
the financial advisors are like, no, you  
have plenty of money, you're fine. You're  
good to go. They're like they can't  
let go. Even  
though they're good, they did the work.  
That's an unhealthy relationship with  
money. And what God is doing through  
scriptures, he's saying, look, I want you  
to thrive and do well in this area. That  
means you make a good living, you spend  
it wisely, you invest it wisely, you give  
generously. Have you ever met somebody  
who's generous with their wealth, who

knows what they're doing with their finances, who knows how to handle it? And they, that's the type of life it's like, yeah, I want to be. What that man or that woman? That's what Scripture teaches. OK, so let's go ahead and get into it, and I'm gonna start with this. We're talking specifically about giving. I want to talk about giving to the local church. What does the Bible have to say about that in the. The background of this is the best possible way to live. Don't turn in your Bibles yet. So I'm going to go through verses. We'll look at the Philippians passage here in a moment, but let's just hear what Scripture has to say about it. The first thing is this generous giving to the local church has been the biblical standard from the absolute very beginning. Generous giving to the local church has been thus standard for the Christian life from the absolute beginning. Some of you talk

here about giving and you're like, well,  
that's for varsity Christians, not  
varsity. I am JV, I show up sometimes on  
Sunday. I volunteer a little bit. Like  
that's for people who are really, really,  
really dedicated to the cause, to which I  
would say, no, it's not actually.

Generously supporting the church God has  
put you in financially. That's just

standard, basic Christian living. It's

one of the most basic spiritual

disciplines and it's been expected of

Christians from the very beginning. Let

me give you some examples. Acts

43, Acts 432, and also. Verses 34

and 35, you read through those and you

see the church in Jerusalem generously

giving to the apostles, who are the

leaders of the Church of that time, so

that the needs can be filled.

This is like right at the birth of the

church. It just kicked off verse 32, and

all believers were united in heart and

mind and they felt that what they owned

was not their own. So they shared everything they had. Those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. You keep going through the New Testament. Get to 1st Corinthians 16

verses one through 2. Paul gives direction for collection of the funds that are given to the church in Jerusalem. All the other churches are supporting the Jerusalem church because they were in need at that time, Paul says. Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God's people in Jerusalem, you should follow the same procedure that I gave to the churches in Galatia. Is coordinating multiple churches on the first day of each week, you should put aside a portion of money you have earned. Don't wait until I get there and try to collect it all at once. It's like this dude has been doing ministry for a while and he already knows the problems before he gets there.

He's like don't wait for me to show up  
and then be like ohh get them. He's like  
just start it now. Couple churches giving  
to support the church in Jerusalem, 2nd  
Corinthians 8 One through 4. Paul  
compliments the Macedonian church for  
their partnership of sharing in a  
financial gift for that Jerusalem church.

He says, Now I want you to know,  
dear brothers and sisters, what God in  
his kindness has done through the  
churches in Macedonia. They are being  
tested. By many troubles, and they are  
very poor. They don't even have very much  
money. But they are also filled with  
abundant joy, which is overflowed in rich  
generosity. For I can testify they gave  
not only what they could afford, but far  
more, and they did it of their own free  
will. They begged us again and again for  
the privilege of sharing in the gift. Are  
the believers and Jerusalem you get  
to 1st Corinthians 9.  
Verses 13 through 14. Here Paul directly

addresses supporting those who work in full time ministry. He says don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple, and those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. In the same way, the Lord ordained those who preached the good news. To be supported by those who benefit from it. You know, because the same thing at First Timothy 5:17 through 18. He says elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. For the scripture says you must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain.

And another place. Those who work deserve their pay. So if anyone was looking for like a sweet 1st tattoo on themselves because that's all the rage right now, I'd recommend that one. It's a good verse. I remember it all the time. Like yeah, support your people, especially

those who work in preaching and teaching.

I need to get a famous athlete to put

like him, put on his bicep and everyone

to look it up and be like, huh? His dad

must have been a pastor. But

Paul's clear, right? Like it's

undeniable. He's like, hey, if someone

works in full-time ministry, they should

be supported. And then Paul talks a lot

about that in his own life. Even in the

book, in Philippians, that's just the

standard. All right, let's keep going.

Now there's a ton of Old Testament verses

as well. I want to be a little bit more

careful with those because, and when I

say a ton, I mean like hundreds and

hundreds and hundreds. But you do have to

be a little more careful because you

don't want to just pull directly out of

the Old Testament and stamp it on New

Testament believers. You have to know the

context. So here's what I can say. With

absolute certainty of the many Old

Testament verses, and again there are

many that address giving, what you can take away from it is that God's heart is for generous giving, and some of that giving is specifically meant to support the temple and those tasked with spiritual leadership. A great verse I'll just quote one is Malachi 3 verses 8 through 10. This is God talking to his people. He says should people cheat God?

Yet you have cheated me. But you ask what do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?

You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me you are under a curse. Where your whole nation has been cheating me bring all the ties into the storehouses so that there will be enough food in the temple. So again, that's not God talking to Nall Ave. Baptist Church, that's God talking to the nation of Israel. But his heart forgiving is clear.

He's saying you're not giving to the temple in this case. To the storehouses of the temple you're giving to me, referring to God, and he

says give to me as I've  
given to you. Alright,  
so that's the first reason, and again,  
I'm grateful for the mentors I've had  
that have walked me through this and help  
me understand. There's just a biblical  
precedent that's undeniable. In fact,  
when people come and argue with me about  
this, I don't even argue. Just pull out  
my Bible and start opening it and say,  
well, you read the verse and you tell me  
what you think. And we go from there. And  
the conversation usually doesn't last  
that long because the real issue is they  
just don't want to hear what the Bible  
has to say about it. All right, let's go  
to the second reason, though. The first  
reason is it's. Very biblical. It's a  
biblical standard set from the very  
beginning, generous financial support of  
the church. But here's the second reason,  
and this is the one that really just  
broke through to me. The second reason is  
that the church deserves generous

financial giving is because of what the church is. Let me say that again, and this really gets at the heart of the question I asked earlier, like, why is the church anymore deserving of any other nonprofit out there? Well, the answer is because, and I'm not denigrating those other nonprofits, I give them multiple other nonprofits besides the church, but because of what the church is. What is the church? Here's what it is.

The church is the instrument. Through which God has chosen to work in this Dark World.

What is the Church Friends of the Church? With all her flaws, with all her blemishes, with all her people, some of which are really easy to get along with, others are harder. Anyone who's been in the church for more than 10 minutes knows that personalities are a thing. And yet the church is God's chosen instrument. It is his chosen

instrument, he said. This is my  
instrument, the very hands and feet of  
Christ that I'm going to work in this  
Dark World. So grab your Bibles and let's  
look at Philippians one together.

This is the passage that Curtis read for  
us. Let's take a look at what Paul says.

Philippians chapter 1, we're just going  
to look at the same verses that were read.

Very brief background on the book

of Philippians. It's a letter written

to the church in Philippi. It's

written from prison. The theme of

Philippians's joy. When Paul talks all

about church life as he goes through the

book to written to the church in

Philippi. Now when you get to chapter 4,

we're not going to read through that in

time sake. You can read it on your own.

But chapter 4, Paul talks all about the

financial support that he's received from

the church. Sometimes Paul accepts

financial support, other times he

doesn't. That's also part of the reason

Paul stayed single, because he just knew

he could move easier and faster and

easier to support himself rather than

trying to support a whole family. And

you've been called to plant churches in

1st century Greco-roman world, heavy

persecution. That was probably a good

decision. It's kind of hard to do that

with the family. But Paul did accept

financial support. You can read all about

it and. Philippians chapter 4. Now this

is what he says at the beginning of it.

Look at starting up in verse 3.

He says I thank my God in all my

remembrance of you always in every prayer

of mine for you all. Let's see for you

all making my prayer with joy because

verse five of your partnership in the

gospel from the first day until now, and

I'm sure of this that he who began a

good work and you will bring it to

completion. In the day of Jesus. It

is right for me to feel this way about

you because I hold you all in my heart,

for you are all partakers with me of

grace. Now I want to

draw your attention to verse 5.

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He says always in every prayer of mine

for you all making my prayer with joy.

Verse 5 because. Of

your partnership in the Gospel

from the first day until

now. Now think about it with

me for a moment. Part of their

partnership with Paul is the financial

support that he talks about at the last

chapter of the book. But note what

Paul says. He does not say, hey, thanks

so much for the new clothes. Thanks very

much for the new shoes. Thanks for

covering that last ship passage that I

needed to be able to get to wherever I

was going. Thanks for making sure I had

enough food to get me through, etcetera,

etcetera. He doesn't say any of that,

instead what he says. This because

of your partnership in

the gospel. And what

is the gospel, friends?

Think back to Mark's good news.

The Kingdom of God

is at hand. God's

Kingdom has burst into this world and it

is now moving through this world, pushing

back the Kingdom of darkness. And what

Paul is telling the church in Philippi is

he's saying by financially supporting me,

you're not just giving a sum of money

or possessions or whatever it might have

been the former support, he's saying. For

partnering with me in that Kingdom

work and the advancement and furthering

of the gospel. Let me say

that again, Paul's telling the Church

of Philippi says it's not just

giving to me. In this case,

Paul, rather through your giving, you

are partnering financially. With the work

that God is doing in this world,

which is the movement of His Kingdom,

pushing back darkness.

I mentioned.

Knowing what the church

is.

If you want to understand that, folks,

you gotta take a step back. You gotta

take a step back and you have to look at

the bigger picture because I know it's so

easy to get caught up.

And just the everyday life of the church,

and we're here at All Ave. Baptist

Church. And sometimes it's hard to have a

big picture of what's going on in the Big

Sea Church throughout the world and what

the church is. But friends, you gotta

take step back and again, look at the

bigger picture. The church is not just a

nonprofit entity. Believe it or not, the

words 501-C3. And the number three are

not written in the Bible. That's just the

IRS giving a designation saying you gotta

this is what we're going to come up with.

You have to understand what the church

is, the big picture. It's a lot more than

just a religious nonprofit entity. So

what is it?I

wrote down a few things. The church is

the fortress which stands against the

satanic powers of this world. That's

what the church is. It's God's chosen

fortress to stand against the satanic

powers of this world. That's why Jesus

said in Matthew 16:18, he says, Now I say

to you, Peter, which means rock, and upon

this rock I will build my church, and all

the powers of hell will not conquer it.

The church is the fortress that God has

chosen. He works through His church and

that is what stands against the satanic

powers of this world. The church is the

place where Christians are trained so

that they can contend for their faith and

spread the gospel and grow into spiritual

maturity. God designed the church. To

that Ephesians 4. Now these gifts, these

are the gifts that that Christ gave to

the church, the apostles, the prophets,

the evangelists, the pastors and

teachers. Their responsibility is to

equip God's people to do His work and build up the body of Christ. The church is God's divine choice, saying this is where people will go to be grown up to contend. You've grown to spiritual maturity. Furthermore, every single church is responsible for the cities in which God has placed them. That's why I keep saying bringing God to our community. Each church is responsible for her city, or cities in our case. That's why when you go to the Book of Revelation, it opens up to the seven churches in the seven cities. Friends, the church is the very body of Christ. It's the very hands and feet of God himself. Think about that for a minute. That is how God, through Scripture, describes the church. It's the hands and feet of Jesus God himself, through which God shows himself to a lost world that desperately needs him. 1st Corinthians 12 For just as there is one body, and it has many members, and all the members of the

body, though many are one body, so it is

with Christ. For one spirit. We were all

baptized into one body, Jew or Greek,

slave or free, and we were made to drink

of 1 spirit, 1 Jesus, one body, one

church. The church is likened to the very

flesh. Of Jesus in a relationship so

intimate it's only described as a

marriage. Think about that. All of

scripture centering upon the person of

Jesus Christ and then the church is

likened to the likeness of Jesus and

such an extent is described as a

marriage. Ephesians 5.

Therefore a man shall leave his father

and mother and hold fast to his wife, and

the two shall become one flesh. This

mystery is profound and I'm saying refers

to Christ and the Church.

Hopefully this will pass. So, friends,

the Church is the living, breathing life

of Christ on this earth now. So

living, breathing life of Christ on this

earth now. Not as something that happened

in the past, but something that is

still. Happening.

So here's where I have the issue, and

again, I'm grateful for people who have

helped work through this with me. But

here's where my problem comes in as a

pastor. When someone comes to me

and they're like, you know, I believe all

that stuff. And I'm happy to

support the church with my time, but I

don't support with my money. Or I support

the church, but just in a very minuscule

amount. Then here's essentially what

they're saying. They're saying, OK, Lord,

I've committed my life and my eternity

fully to you. I confess that you're my

creator. You know the hairs on my head.

You know exactly when I'll die. My entire

life is yours. I realize that without

the gospel, the world is utterly lost and

hopeless. And I realize that the church

is an absolutely indispensable part of

your plan for reaching the world. With

their only hope, which is Jesus Christ,

an indispensable part of that plan for  
reaching the world. With their one hope.

And I'm all in, baby, I'm all in.

Except with my pocketbook.

That doesn't make any sense.

Friends, you have to take a  
step back and realize what the  
church is.

When you participate in giving, even in  
all Ave. Baptist Church or all the other  
for other Christians that go to other  
churches, and there's many good churches  
in this city, what you are participating  
in is the gospel, the Kingdom itself  
being furthered through God's chosen  
instrument. That's what you  
and I are called to do.

And that's why from the very beginning,  
all the way back when the church started,  
back in Acts 2, that's been the standard  
and the expectation ever since.

Now let's talk numbers. I'm gonna get  
this out of here on time.

You're like, alright, fine, what are we

talking about here? How much? What's a reasonable amount of giving?

I used to never talk about Dan and I was

giving and then one day I heard another

pastor talk about him and his wife's

giving and I thought, I don't know why I

don't talk about it. Our

jobs to set the example and what we

do even in private areas of life. If

you go through the Bible, the biblical

model of giving is always talked about in

percentages, not in dollar amounts, in

percentages. In fact, it's interesting if

you look at the billionaires throughout

the world, they give a lot of money.

Some of them, like Warren Buffett's given

a lot of money away. But if you look at

the percentage of his overall wealth that

he's given, and no shade on Buffett,

Buffett's a good guy. I appreciate the

money that he's given, but it's a very,

very low percentage of his overall

wealth. And there's more going on there.

Like when you have money wrapped up in

investments, you can't just go cash it all out at the bank. It doesn't quite work that way. But if you look at even the world's wealthiest. To give way more in dollar amounts. But if you look at the percentage of their giving compared to their overall wealth, it's like a it's like 1% or 2%, something like that.

The biblical picture of giving is always done through percentages. And if you go through the Old Testament and you go through the New Testament, the percentage that comes up again and again, it's 10 percent, 10%. Some people do gross, some people do net. So that's what Dana and I have done for many, many years. We give 10% right off the top. And I get paid.

Technology is awesome. I don't have to think about it. I don't have to try to remember it. I don't have to do any of that. Just 10% off the top goes right back to the church. I tell people church is the only job where when you get paid, you just give money right back to your

employer. It's kind of interesting, but  
we sort of do that through the IRS. But  
so one of the few jobs where you do that,  
I get paid and then 10%. It goes right  
off the top back to the church. And then  
what we do is we support other  
organizations and missionaries on top of  
that. So some organization we've worked  
through is World Vision. We've had kids  
through World Vision so long. The kids  
grew up and they gave us new kids and  
those kids are about growing up like it's  
been a while. We support different  
missionaries who are out in the world.

Support things like the Bible Project,  
organizations that I think are doing  
really, really good work that I want to  
be a part of, but that's the standard  
that we've landed on is 10%. Because  
that's the biblical standard set up in  
the Old and New Testament. And then we  
give to others on top of that. So here's  
my challenge for you as we come into this  
new year. And for some of you, you might

hear me say that and be like, man, I give 10% already. I give more than 10%. In fact, I don't want to forget to mention this. Our church even is is up to that standard. In fact, the church and all of New Baptist Church, we give away more than 10% because we are partnering in the gospel and we give to church playing networks and missionaries. And so even the church itself upholds that standard above and beyond it. So

here's my challenge to you. Some of you may already give 10% or you may give more than that. And if so, go on your way.

Thank you so much for your generosity. Like I know, no change necessary. That's great. But my challenge to the rest of the church is this. As you come to this new year, I want you to examine the percentage. That you are giving to the

church. Look at your income, what comes in and look at the percentage. And if you're looking at it and it's like dog gone, man, it's like 1 percent, 2%,

something like that. That's when you have to have a conversation with the Lord. But that conversation shouldn't go like this.

Lord, do you want me to give more?

OK, I didn't say anything. I guess I'm good to go. That's not how you have the conversation. Here's what you do.

You grab your Bible. If you can't remember all the verses I talked about, don't worry it's on YouTube. The lights in the background be flickering cause I guess it's weird stuff with technology, but just listen to it. You open up your Bible, you go back to the verses that we went through today. Or you can just jump on AI and say give me all the Bible

verses. About giving all the start populating and you have to let the Bible confront you. That's how you have that prayer conversation and then you open up your Bible, you read the verses and you pray through Scripture back to the Lord and say, what are you telling me through your word?

You have to let the Bible confront you.  
And by the way, that's not just true of  
giving, it's true in every single area of  
life. God, through Scripture, speaks. So  
that's my challenge to you, Church. The  
33% who are doing that 73%, whatever the  
exact number was the financial lifting,  
I'm so grateful for you and I know it's  
probably the same people who have been  
giving very faithfully for a very long  
time. Thank you. And for those who are  
giving as much as they can, I'm grateful  
for you. But God offers us  
life and freedom through generous giving,  
especially to the local church. As he  
says, this is my chosen instrument that  
I've chosen at work to bring my Kingdom  
to this world. All right, so let's go