

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.

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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, 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 tithes 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?!

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 miniscule

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 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 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