



# CANYON HILLS

## COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: First and Best

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## **First and Best – Part 2**

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Wow! What a meaningful time of worship. You know, we just reminded ourselves and each other that God is real, God is on his throne, and God loves us, and there is proof in the cross. Now, God wants to talk to us. He wants us to settle down and settle our hearts. He speaks to us through his Word, so I'm going to ask you to get your Bibles close by and open them up to 2 Corinthians. While you're doing that, I just want to take a minute for just a brief announcement or commercial, if you like.

A lot of you are fairly new to Canyon Hills. You've been coming here for several months (maybe a little bit longer than that) and you're starting to get the sense that maybe this is the church you want to call home. If that's the case, we have a class coming up this coming Saturday to kind of help you with that decision. It's called Discover Canyon Hills Membership Class, and that's where we just tell you a little bit about who we are, what we believe, what we're excited about, and what the future holds.

It's a place for you to ask a lot of questions, get a lot of answers, and just help you along in that journey of deciding, "Is this where we want to call our church home?" You need to register for that. Make sure you look in the bulletin; all the details are there. I would love to see you there next Saturday. You do have to register because there's lunch involved and we want to make sure we have enough for you. All right! That's that.

If you weren't here last Sunday, we're taking just a little bit of a break from our verse-by-verse study through the gospel of Mark. That's what we're doing on Sunday mornings, but today is the second message (part 2) in just a little emphasis we're calling our *First and Best*. In part 1, last week, we focused on what real devotion to Jesus actually looks like. What does it look like in the life of a person who says and wants to love Jesus with all their heart?

We looked at Mary. Not the mother of Jesus, but Mary of "Martha and Mary" fame. We looked at an example in her devotion to Jesus last week that was really quite shocking on several levels. At first, it was shocking because of the sheer abandonment of her whole life to Jesus. She held nothing back, and we saw that in a real-time example in the Scripture last Sunday.

The other thing that was shocking about her devotion was the reaction of the other followers of Jesus around her. When they saw her devotion, they ridiculed her. They were basically saying that level of devotion is impractical. In fact, I think in modern vernacular they were saying, "She's a little too fanatical when it comes to how much she loves Jesus."

Yet I think the most surprising part of the whole scene was Jesus himself. It was shocking because Jesus not only accepted her devotion, he applauded it. He commended her commitment and actually defended it as what would and should be *normal* devotion and love for him.

What was so moving about her devotion to Jesus was that her love for Jesus was obviously more serious to her than her love for all the people in her life, it was more serious than her love for her own personal goals or desires, and it was certainly more serious than her love for her own personal possessions.

In essence, what Jesus did in that moment was shift our thinking about our commitment to him. He shifted it from being something routine, practical, or convenient, and he moved our hearts and our minds to the idea that commitment to him is radical. It's extravagant. It's sold-out when you compare it to anyone or anything else in our lives that we love and to which we are devoted.

Now, today, we're going to look at some churches in the New Testament that are going to model for us what this kind of first and best devotion looks like in the spiritual discipline of our giving. I want us to be reminded of what God's Word says and upholds as genuine Christian generosity.

This is a huge part of who we are as followers of Christ and children of God, and I want us to see what the Bible upholds as true, real devotion in this area, so with your Bibles open to 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, let's go ahead and stand for the reading of God's Word. You follow along; I'm going to pick it up in verse 1. The apostle Paul is writing, and he says,

**"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 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.**

**For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor [privilege] of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.**

**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. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. 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."**

Why don't we just stop right there? Let me pray.

Father in heaven, we do thank you for your Word, for speaking to us so clearly. God, it's our prayer now that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you would open our hearts and minds to what this means and what it looks like in our lives, practically. God, we acknowledge that your Word is without error. We acknowledge, God, that it's true, and we submit to it as the authority for our lives and our faith. We ask now that you would have your way. Change us today, God, to be more like Jesus. In his name, amen.

I want you to hear me say that it does fill be with incredible joy that so many people who call this their church do generously give to honor the Lord and to carry out his work in the world. Now, the truth is there's a staggering amount to say about money and giving in the Bible. In fact, I want you to hear me say this.

I've said it before, but there's more than twice as many verses in the Bible about money and possessions as there are about the subjects of faith and prayer combined. Somebody has done the research and actually counted all those verses. I haven't done it, but it's true. It's even more startling when you think Jesus said more and taught more on the subject of money and possessions than he ever taught about heaven and hell.

I suppose the reason is because money and possessions are such an exact index to a person's true character and true devotion to what they truly worship. In fact, in Matthew, chapter 6, when Jesus was talking about money, he equated the love of money with the hatred of God. Loving money automatically equals the hatred of God. That's a sobering thought, when you think about that. I want to talk about the fully-devoted follower of Jesus and our money, and the first principle out of this passage from the apostle Paul is this:

1. *God doesn't want our money; he wants us.* In spite of what some people think and what some people accuse God of, God didn't so love the world that he sent a bill collector. No, he sent his only Son to die on the cross to save us from our sin as well as to save us from his coming wrath, fury, and punishment that is coming upon all unrepentant sinners. Jesus came to die so our sins would be forgiven and we could be spared from God's wrath and judgment that's coming upon the whole world.

I want you to look at verse 5, here. This is really the pinnacle of Paul's excitement when he's describing the Christians in the Macedonian churches. He says, in verse 5, "**...and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord...**" That's not what he didn't expect. The second part is, "...and then they gave themselves to us."

In fact, he's saying, "They trusted us. When we taught them God's way, they listened to us." That was exciting, but he highlights that first they gave themselves fully to the Lord. He's rejoicing that these people had given themselves to God. That means they put all of their trust and faith in Jesus' death on the cross for their forgiveness, to save them. That's vital. I think that's right there in verse 5 because he knows none of what they had done in the area of giving could have happened unless they gave themselves to God first.

If you look down at verse 2, it says they were in the midst of severe affliction. Some of your Bibles say *persecution* or *suffering*. It was really hard to follow Jesus where these people were. It was not easy geographically. It was not easy historically. It was tough to be a Christian. He was saying it was severe. You not only could lose your job and family, but you could lose your life to follow Jesus in this moment.

In the same verse, he says they were incredibly generous. They gave as much as they were able, he says in verse 3, even beyond their ability to give. In verse 4, it says, "Entirely on their own, they begged us and pleaded so they could participate in the privilege of giving and sharing." I think this explains why so many unbelievers gripe so much whenever the topic of money comes up in church.

Have you had that conversation with somebody? Have you ever talked to someone, maybe someone in your own family or extended family, who's just angry at God or at the church? Usually near the top of the list is, "All they want is my money." Have you ever had that conversation? Some of you have probably said that in your past. Well, nothing can be further from the truth.

I remember that my father-in-law taught me early on in my ministry that those who have given themselves to God first are never offended by God's Word on this topic. You see, if the subject of money or giving bothers you, it might be a sign that you haven't yet, like Mary last week and like the Macedonian Christians this week, given yourself fully to the Lord. There's a part of you that you have not surrendered, and so it bugs you when that part of you is talked about in church. It could be that that's the reason.

Paul just says, "Listen. You have to get one thing straight if you're going to even learn about this topic of devotion. God doesn't want your money. He wants you, and once he has you, something happens in our hearts about money."

2. *Our giving is a conduit of God's grace to others.* It's a conduit of God's grace. Now, if I were to use present-day language, I might word the point like this: *Our giving is God's Amazon Prime delivery system of his grace to others.* Now you all know what I mean, right? It's amazing to think about this. Look at verse 1. He says, "**We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given...**" He's writing to the Corinthians, and he's saying, "There's some grace, God's grace, that has been given."

Then, if you look at verse 6, he says, "**Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.**" Look at verse 7. "**But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech...knowledge...earnestness, and...love...see that you excel in this act of grace...**" Three times, he refers to giving as a motion, as a flow of God's grace to others.

How does that play itself out? What does that look like when God's grace flows through our giving to others? All you have to do is look down in chapter 9, in verse 11. He's describing what

the results of this grace are, flowing through us to others. He says, in verse 11, **"You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God."** He's saying through us, God has supplied so we can be generous, and through us, our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ get to thank God.

Now look at verse 12. **"For the ministry of this service [our giving] is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God."** In other words, it spills out from us being able to thank God to unbelievers being able to thank God. The conduit of God's grace just flows through us to others.

Verse 13: **"By their approval of this service [giving], they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ..."** There it is. When we give ourselves to God, when we submit ourselves to the truth about Jesus, when we surrender and say, "All of me is for all of you," he says...

Look at the next phrase. **"...and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you."** Wow! Paul is reminding us that God's loving provision for people does not just drop out of the sky with a parachute. No, God provides for people through us. His plan for the proof of his love and grace in the world flows through us first. What an amazing thought, isn't it?

3. *Our giving should always be increasing.* There's a natural relationship between our growing faith in God and our growing giving. I see this coming clear in verse 3. Speaking of the Christians in Macedonia, where there was severe trial, he says, **"...they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord..."** "According to their means" is God's plan. That means according to what we have, our resources, our income. We give according to that. That's normal.

Yet as our faith in God grows, as our trust in our loving, faithful God grows, so naturally does our giving. Then, he says, in the same verse, they gave even beyond that, so they were giving because they knew what God had done for them. They were faithful. Yet as they gave, they kept seeing God take care of them, and so they gave even more. That means they gave more than what would be expected, more than what they would be naturally moved to give. It was unusual, and the only explanation for that was that their trust in God was growing.

Look at verse 7 again. **"But as you excel in everything..."** Some of your Bibles might say *grow* or *mature*. "As your faith matures, as your speech... As you learn to talk about God and be more gracious in the way you speak, in your knowledge of God, in your earnestness and genuineness and in your love..." Look at this. **"...see that you excel in this act of grace also."** Paul is saying here that in our transformation, in our sanctification, we should always be growing and maturing.

Then, he lists those things: in our faith, our speech, our knowledge, our earnestness, and our love. Now, we read that and none of us would be offended by that. None of us would even disagree with that. Of course, as we grow more and more in love with Jesus, he begins to

transform us and change us, and that should be continually happening in an increasing way. Yet then he ends it with that last statement. "See to it that you excel in this act of grace, your giving, also."

One of the things Tammi and I did years ago is commit ourselves to try and increase our giving from year to year, to just look for ways we could grow in this part of our lives. That became quite the challenge, especially during those years when you have three kids in college or when things happen, whether it's catastrophe or whatever.

It was challenging at times, and it still is. It's our goal to want to be growing in that part of our Christian life, and that's exactly what Paul is showing us was happening in their lives. Then he says, "I want you, Corinthians... I want you, Canyon Hills, to see to it that you're excelling there as well." It's getting quiet in here, so let's keep going.

4. *Our giving is real proof of our genuine love.* Isn't that true about everything we love? Isn't the proof that we love someone or something, whether it's a person, a hobby, or a cause we're passionate about? We give our time and our money to who and what we love and believe in. That's what we do!

Look at verse 8. It says, **"I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine."** He says, "I'm calling you to excel in this grace of giving because it's the evidence of your love for others, for your fellow believers, for the hurting in the world. Then, in verse 9, he says, **"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."**

He is saying, "Do you want to know what the evidence is that you truly understand what Jesus did for you? One of the undeniable proofs is that you're faithful in your generous giving." Jesus did it for us, and so he says it's a natural response. It's undeniable evidence. You get it. You understand what Jesus has accomplished for you by giving his very life. So when it comes to all of our giving, Scripture teaches us that...

5. *Our first and best giving must be to God first.* I remember talking about this to a man who struggling with this concept, the concept of giving to God first. He asked me, "Steve, do you mean to tell me that God wants me to give to his work first before paying all my bills? How would any of us survive if we did that? Who would take care of our families if we did that?" He looked at me and he said, "This sounds like terrible financial advice."

So, I did with him what I try to do whenever I get questions like this. I just said, "Let's open our Bibles." I had him turn to Proverbs 3, so why don't we turn there together? I just opened it up, turned to Proverbs 3, and I just had him read it, because I know how God works. He uses his Word to just open our spiritual eyes sometimes. Sometimes we don't even expect it, and then God does it.

If you look at Proverbs, chapter 3, verse 9, Solomon says, "**Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce...**" He says, first of all, "**Honor the LORD...**" Put him first. Give him your love and trust. Cherish him above everyone else. That's what he says there. *Honor* means to hold up in high regard. "**Honor the LORD...**" How? He says, "**...with your wealth [income] and with the firstfruits [first parts] of your produce...**" Circle that.

Now, again, some of your Bibles say *crops*. It was an agricultural economy in these days, and so they would have completely understood that. That's no excuse for us to say, "Oh, *whew*, I don't have any crops. It's not me." No, we don't get to do that. Then, look at what he says in verse 10. "**...then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.**" The outcome of honoring God in this way will be that you will actually have more than you need.

So, I shared with him that when I pay my bills, I don't look at the stack of bills first. Sometimes that could be a little scary, depending on the situation there. I shared with him that the very first check I write or click I make to pay our bills online... The very first one that I enter in and hit "Pay" is my giving to God.

So, he asked me if I would pray with him to have the courage and strength to be faithful. After a few days, he called me and he said, "All right. I'm going to try this. I'm going to commit to giving to God first. I'm starting with my next paycheck." It was cool. In the coming weeks and months, he told me story after story about how God was actively working in his family's finances.

He became so encouraged by him having enough that a couple of years later, he called me back. He had been laid off. He lost his job. He was still in the church. He said, "Hey, I want you to know I lost my job, but I'm still giving my tithe of my unemployment check." I just smiled on the other end of the phone right then.

He couldn't explain it. There was no logic to it. There was no math to it, but his barns had plenty and God's provision was always enough. Making the spiritual decision to give to God first, he and his family learned more about the love, care, and reality of God being his loving, heavenly Father through that discipline of giving to God first than any other Christian activity in their lives.

This is what Jesus does in the heart of a person who is fully devoted to him. See, before Jesus, our sin had blinded us from clearly seeing God for who he truly is, but when you surrender to Christ, one of the things he does is restore a true picture of God's true character so we understand who God is.

6. *Our giving to God is to be proportionate.* The question I'm asked the most is, "How much of my money does God want me to give to him?" I always answer that question with the same response. I will usually say something like, "I think you're asking the wrong question. The better

question would be, 'How much of God's money does he want me to keep for myself?'" That's a better question, isn't it? It's certainly more biblical.

The answer to that is very clear in Scripture. It's 90 percent. Leviticus 27, verse 30, says a tithe of everything belongs to the Lord. "...it is holy to the LORD." That word, *tithe*, means one tenth, and it's a brilliant formula because of the fairness of it. See, we can never accuse God of being unfair or playing favorites. God doesn't desire equal amounts. He desires equal devotion.

I want you to get back to 2 Corinthians, chapter 8, and I want you to look at a couple of verses with me in the same passage. We didn't read that far yet, but it's right there in verses 13 and 14. Paul says, **"For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness."**

Paul is saying, "God doesn't expect us to give in unfair ways where we give, and all of a sudden we're giving the majority where other people aren't, or vice versa. No, we want to give to God first. We want to give this tithe to God first. There's going to be a time in your life where you're going to need God's family around. You're going to need God's people. There's going to be a time somewhere. It may not feel like it right now, but you're going to need people to come around you. You're going to need them to hold you up, especially financially. You're going to thank God for his plan of giving."

As we're giving now, it's going out as a conduit of God's grace to help many, but sometime in our lives, we're going to be on the other end of that conduit and we're going to be grateful for God's plan of giving through others, coming to meet our needs. See, tithing is not a call to heroic sacrifice. Unfortunately, a lot of people in the church have convinced themselves that that's the case. It's a call to *fair* and *loving* sacrifice. Tithing is supernatural for a couple of reasons.

A. *Somehow, God has arranged to carry out his work of redemption in the world with only 10 percent of his own resources.* Remember Psalm 24? Remember what we know about God? **"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein..."** The earth, the world, and everybody in the world belongs to God. Everything and everyone about the universe is already God's, and God is choosing to carry out his plan of redemption with just 10 percent of his world resources.

B. *He has somehow arranged to take care of us and to supply everything we need with 90 percent of what he gives to us.* He is saying, "I can do more with the 90 percent than you can do with the 100 percent." In fact, look at it in 2 Corinthians, chapter 9, verse 8. **"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work."** Now, in my Bible, the word *all* is circled four times.

God is saying, "I can make this work. The math doesn't work. If you want to sit down and try to pencil it out, it doesn't work, but I can make it work." I would ask you, would it be fair to say this morning that refusing to trust God in this area is equal to calling God a liar? Please let this sink in.



If we continue to refuse to believe God could make all things sufficient for us when we trust him in this area, if we refuse to trust him, are we not calling God a liar? See, whenever we think we have a better plan for our lives than God does, we're deceived. We're deceiving ourselves. Whenever we think our plan will work better than God's plan, we're deceived.

Early on in my preaching ministry, I used to encourage people who weren't giving to just start where they can, because here's the truth. This is a sad truth. All the research keeps telling us the same thing, that 50 percent of people who sit in church every single week never give, ever. Nothing. If they do, it's so random and seldom that it's immeasurable.

I'd like to say there's no way that's true about here, but if it is, that means half of everyone sitting here has made a conscious choice. You're just not going to believe it. You're not going to trust God. I used to preach on giving whenever the verses would come up. I'd say, "Hey, just start somewhere. Just start giving anything." I have since apologized for that. That was absolutely wrong.

See, here was my concern. My concern was when I came to passages about money in the Bible, I didn't want to be *that* pastor. I didn't want to be *that* preacher who used guilt to somehow twist your arm to trust God in this area. I just didn't want that to be your motivation, so I would just say, "Hey, don't worry. Just start doing something."

I've since learned that this guilt is not always a bad thing. In fact, it's a good sign that the Holy Spirit is working in us and opening our eyes to more of God's truth and more of God's best. My experience has been that, for a lot of people, soon into the journey of faithful, devoted first-and-best giving, they cross that mile marker of joy, never to return to guilt again. With time and obedience, our giving grows with cheerful faith and trust.

I said the first question I always get is, "How much?" The second question I'm always asked is, "Does it matter where I give? Where do I give my tithe? Can I divide it up between my favorite missionaries, churches, or ministries? Does it matter? I'm giving, but I give a one percent here, a two percent here, a one, a three, and I divide it up on all these ways. Is that okay?" It's a good question. It's an important question, and one that God doesn't ignore.

When I get that question, I usually do what I try to always do. I open the Bible. Do you want to do that? Do you want an answer to that question? Turn to Malachi, chapter 3. Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, right before Matthew. Just see it for yourselves. Look at verse 8. This is God speaking to the prophet. He says,

**"Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions [offerings]. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."**

Again, there's God's promise. We need to decide. Are we going to believe him or not? Right in the middle of that is the answer. The principle all throughout the Old Testament is that God has always had a place where his people gathered as a family to worship him. It was in that context that tithing was expressed as a gift to God, as faith in God, as devotion to God.

See, there's no argument about this. The church is the number one benevolent army in the world. More homeless are sheltered, more disasters are responded to, more hungry are fed, more poor are provided for, more naked are clothed, and more oppressed are fought for through the church than all other organizations on the earth combined, because of God's grace.

If the church suffers or fades away because of random acts of what I would call unbiblical giving, then much of that goes away and God is robbed. In that context, we carry out our giving even when we can't be here on certain Sundays. The truth is there are always those Sundays when you're traveling or out of town and you can't be here at your church home. Even the most faithful aren't here *every* single week, but we still need to carry out the grace of giving.

Think of it this way. When Tammi and I are out of town, my house payment is still due. My mortgage payment is still due. I may pay it a little early, or I may pay it a little late, but I pay it. If I'm willing to do that with my mortgage company, why would I be willing to have my giving be haphazard or arbitrary? I love that the faithfulness of a lot of you at Canyon Hills shows up every week in the mail or online. You have this grace of giving. This discipline is a part of your life and it's evidenced by that.

This doesn't mean we're never encouraged to give or be generous outside the offering plates of the church. We're encourage all throughout Scripture to be good Samaritans as God gives us divine appointments and divine opportunities to help those who are in need. These offerings are called *freewill offerings*. In Malachi, it uses the word *contribution* there. If God lays it on our hearts to sacrifice out of love for the hurting and needy he puts in our path, then we are absolutely moved and encouraged to do that.

I want to ask you if you noticed that something has been missing in our worship service today. Did anybody notice something that hasn't happened? What didn't we do today. How come none of you raised your hand and said, "Steve, you forgot the offering! What's going on? Why didn't you do that?" No, we didn't forget. We're not taking an offering. We're not receiving an offering today.

For those of you who planned to give today and brought your offering with you, we're going to ask you to give it away this week. God has met our needs this month. We're doing great. Our missionaries are supported. All the ministries are supported, and so we want you to pray, "God, use me this week as a conduit of your grace."

I want you to experience doing that. Some of you may already know somebody in need. Maybe it's a person at work, a neighbor, or extended family. I'm not talking about just blessing them with a gift. I'm talking about having our antennas up, saying, "God, where do you want me to be

your grace in someone's need and give it away this week?" I can't wait to hear how God will use you in that moment.

There's a third question I'm commonly asked. The first one is, "How much of my money should I give?" The second one is, "Can I give it wherever and whenever I want?" The third one is very common. Basically, this is what I'm asked: "Do I give from the net or the gross?" Just so we're clear, the net is what you actually take home. The gross is the entire income before the deductions for taxes, retirement, Social Security, or whatever.

Whenever I get that question, I always try to do the same thing. I always try to open the Bible, so why don't we do that? Let's just go to 2 Corinthians, chapter 9. Here's how I answer the question. Look at verses 6 and 7 with me. I love how Paul starts this sentence. **"The point is this..."** So, I say the same. Here's the point, when it comes to this question, anyway.

**"...whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."** See, here's what I think is true. I think every ounce of my pay, my salary... All of it is from God, even the parts I pay my taxes with, I save with, and put away. All of that came from God, so that's how I make the decision.

We've all heard the words, "It's more blessed to give than to receive." Do you remember who said that? The one who gave his life on the cross for us said that. So, here's what we're doing. Next week is the final message in this series. Next Sunday, we're calling it our First and Best Sunday. This is my hope and prayer.

This is what I hope will happen in our midst. I'm hoping that 100 percent of everyone who calls this their church home will be in church on the same Sunday. Not in the same service; that's not going to work. We have three services, so I'm hoping we'll all be here: everyone in town, worshipping God together.

Secondly, my hope is that every one of us would figure out a way... I know some of us get paid once a month, every two weeks, or however you get paid, but I'm hoping we can all bring our tithe that week, whether it's for one week or whatever. We're going to all come with tithes in hand together on one Sunday.

Then, next Sunday, we're also going to bring all of our faith. We want to grow in our faith and trust in God and our devotion to him, and we're going to bring our impossible prayer requests with us to church next Sunday. We're going to offer them to God as an offering of faith, and we're going to ask God to do impossible, miraculous things in every service.

Whatever that is, that miracle you need in your life, home, family, circumstance, or circumstances of your loved ones, we're going to actually write them down, and then we're going to pray like we've never prayed before. That's next Sunday. I don't know what God is going to do next Sunday, but I pray you will come.

I pray you will change your plans, if you have plans, unless you have flights somewhere, that you will try to be here. We're just going to give God our first and best, and we're going to determine that ahead of time, that that's what we're going to do next week. I would encourage you to get here a little early. Let's just see how God moves in our hearts. Would you bow your heads with me?

Father in heaven, I want to pray for those in this room who need the courage to trust you in this area of their lives. I pray, God, that somehow, they've heard your Word today where you are trustworthy and faithful, and I pray that they would make a decision before they leave this room that you are good on your promises.

God, I pray for next week that whatever you plan to do in our hearts, we would be open to it and that this would be a place filled with mighty worship, mighty faith, and faithful giving. Yet God, more than all that, I pray for anyone in this room who is sitting here who has not first fully surrendered their hearts to you. I pray that today would be the day they've heard what Jesus has done for them and that today would be the day of their salvation. God, do a miracle. I ask in Christ's name, amen.

We have people standing up here right now who would love to talk to any of you who still want to surrender your heart to Jesus. All you need to do is come up to them before you leave and just say, "Hey, I want to ask Jesus to be my Savior." They want to give you something to go home with today. They want to encourage you to get started in that walk with him. I hope you'll do that. I can't wait to see you next Sunday. God bless you.