

The Greatest Apologetic?

Philippians 4:14-23

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

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So, November 25, 2019 is a day that I'm just never, ever going to forget. Throughout my entire life I'm never going to forget it. And all of us have days like that. Days you're never going to forget. Maybe it's the day you got married, maybe it's your firstborn son or daughter being born, maybe it's the day you graduated from college. All of us have those days that we're just never going to forget. And on November 25, 2019 that was one of those days for me because on November 25, 2019 I bought Tesla stock. And if you know anything about the stock market, it's been a wild ride this past year. And just a quick primer, S&P 500 is about the benchmark for stocks. There's around 500 stocks and on average it goes up about 7% year over year. So, whenever you're investing in a stock you want to beat 7%. So really the goal is—you would be happy with 8%. So, I bought Tesla stock just over a year ago. And in this time it has gone up 1,022% in just over a year. So, just put that into perspective if on November 25, 2019 I invested \$1,000, as of today, it would be worth \$10,220. So, I thought about keeping this a secret but I figured that y'all would want to know. You see we've been building this parking lot; I'm paying for it. Figured you guys would just want to be grateful. Don't thank me, thank Tesla. No, I'm not paying for that thing. Because honestly I didn't really make that much money at all. I didn't make that much money at all because I sold it a couple of weeks after I bought it. You see, it was crazy so I put all of this money in and in a few weeks it went up like 50% so I just bailed and took the money and ran and I couldn't believe how lucky I was. But now I look back and I just can't believe how shortsighted I was. I mean I missed out on so much money. If those numbers were true, and I had invested \$1,000 it would now be worth something like \$10,000. I missed out on something like eight and a half thousand dollars. So, in other words, that's like a new renovated bathroom in my house, that's free chick-fil-a every day for three years, that's one candle at magnolia. Like I could have bought—so much money—I could have bought so much stuff with all that money that I missed out on. But now I can't help but look back at those numbers with so much regret. You see I missed out on so much. I just look back and think my money could have done so much for me.

And I share that story today because I don't want you to have that same regret with your finances. Because as we're finishing up the book of Philippians what we're going to learn is there is an investment that's much better than Tesla. Man, I know that sounds cheesy. But this investment doesn't give you a year over year investment return of 1,022%. It's better than that. This investment brings you more joy, gives you more impact, gives you more peace than any other investment possibly ever could. And friends, I just don't want you to look back on your life with the same regret thinking my money could have done more for me. I don't want you to get to the end of your life and realize that you've piled up all this cash and missed out on all of these opportunities. I don't want you to think my money could have actually advanced the gospel and not myself. You know, I think there's always something weird whenever we talk about generosity in church. Like we've all seen churches do this poorly. We've all seen pastors do this poorly. And there's something weird talking about generosity specifically in 2020. I mean I know it's one thing to joke about selling Tesla too soon, it's a whole other thing to not be sure how you're going to afford Christmas this year. It's a whole other thing to not be sure how you're going to keep your business afloat or how you're going to continue to pay your mortgage. I know that's real for people in this room and for people listening online. 2020 has been a really hard year. So, it'd be easy to skip over the topic of generosity but really the topic of generosity in the Bible has never been about how much money you have or how much money you give, it's never been about the money. It's been about the heart behind why you give. In fact, the most generous person in the Gospels, Jesus pointed out, is a woman who gave two pennies. You see, it's never been about the money. But I think whenever the topic of generosity comes up, we're so prone to think—no matter how much money you've had—whether you've just had the best financial year of your life or whether you've just had 2020 the worst financial year of your life—we're prone to think I don't have enough money to be generous...*yet*. You see I haven't paid off my mortgage *yet*, I haven't saved enough for my kids' college *yet*, I don't have enough money in my 401k *yet*. Well, let me tell you: *yet* is never coming.

There's always going to be another *yet*, another goal, another dollar amount you think you need to have, another raise you think you need to be generous. But generosity is never about how much money you have or even how much money you give. Generosity is always about the why behind the what. So today, as I said we're going to be finishing up the book of Philippians. It's just been a fantastic study in the book of Philippians as we've learned how to find joy in each and every season. Today, we're going to learn how to find joy in generosity. And I'm going to go quickly this morning. We're going to fly through this thing because JP's going to come up on the backend to make sure all of us members have an understanding of what's going on in Harris Creek's financial life. So I'm going to fly through this thing but as we finish up the book of Philippians, Paul concludes this book to the church in Philippi by thanking them for their generosity. In fact, the book of Philippians is really just a thank-you note for the gift that the church in Philippi had sent to Paul while he was in Rome. And as he spends these last verses thanking them for their generosity, we're going to learn that generous people tend to believe three things about God and money. There's three different beliefs that generous people have about God and money. And if we can believe these things, it will change the way that we give and that we live. So, let's just start reading the text in verse fourteen. Paul wrote this to the church in Philippi. ***Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving; except you***

only; for even when I was in Thessalonica you sent me aid for than once when I was in need.

So, the church in Philippi has really been this model example of generosity. On multiple occasions, whenever Paul was in need, they sent him money time after time after time. And it's because of one specific phrase in this passage—this one phrase stuck out to me more than anything else—Paul said this, ***in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel.*** See, when you just came to know Jesus, when you just understood the Gospel, there is one thing that started happening in your life. You became generous. Because when you understand the gospel, you understand the importance of generosity. Because point #1 is generous people tend to believe that generosity is at the heart of the gospel.

1. Generosity is at the heart of the gospel

You know it's really the essence of the gospel itself. And you know the most important type of generosity is the generosity whenever someone covers something that you could not otherwise afford. So, for example, if we went out to eat right after this...we went to the best pizza place in town, we went to Shorty's and you paid for my meal, man I would be grateful but I can afford Shorty's. I mean it's like the cheapest pizza you can get. And so, I would be grateful but it wouldn't really change my life. But if we went to Shorty's after this and you said, "Nate, I'm going to pay for your meal and I'm going to pay for your mortgage." I would have a much different response because you would be paying for something that I otherwise could not afford. You would be paying for something that would take me thirty years to crawl out of. That type of generosity would elicit an entirely different response because you would be paying for that which we otherwise could not afford. And see, this is the gospel. This is what we have in the gospel, in Jesus. Because you see, our sins have separated us from God. This is what the gospel teaches us—that we've sinned, that we've fallen short of the glory of God—and it's put us into a debt that we simply cannot crawl out of. Now, I know for many us we've been taught through religion that if we work hard enough and we do enough good deeds we can make it into Heaven. It's just not scripture. Isaiah says that even our best deeds are like filthy rags to God. Because our good deeds are like filthy rags because they're still covered in sin; they put us into a debt that we could not pay off and a hole we can't crawl out of. We need someone to pay off our debt for us; we need someone to take our sin for us. This is what we have in Jesus. And Paul eloquently put this in Ephesians 5:1-2. He said, ***Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love just as Christ loved us and I love this phrase gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*** You see, Jesus saw this debt we can never pay off and he said "I got it. Let me cover it". In fact, the very last word he said on this earth, before he died was *Tetelestai*. *Tetelestai* means the debt is paid in full. It's an accounting term. The debt's been paid off; it's finished.

See, this is what we have in Jesus. The most generous moment in human history was two thousand years ago on the cross of Jesus Christ. And as he generously gave all of himself—he didn't tithe his blood, he didn't give 10% of his blood, he gave all of himself—and as he gave all of himself to us, he also generously gave us an abundant life here and an eternal life when we die. You see, the most generous moment in human history was on the cross of Jesus Christ because he paid for that which we could not otherwise afford. But what's confusing—what's confusing—is that when the topic of generosity comes up in church, we tend to look at God and we think "God, what's the *minimum* I have to give?" And that's confusing because we believe

that God looked at us and said “What’s the *maximum* I can give? What’s the maximum I can give? I’ll give anything, I’ll give them all of myself just to get them home.” And we look and we say, “What’s the minimum I can give?” Man, that’s confusing because I’m not sure we actually believe what the gospel is. But the church at Philippi got it. They understood the gospel. They understood the generosity of Jesus. And since they realized they had been given abundantly, they were willing to be generous to those around them. And it’s because—point #1—generous people believe that generosity is at the heart of the gospel.

So, let’s keep going in this text and see what Paul continues by saying in verse seventeen. Paul wrote this, ***Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.*** Now, that verse is confusing. I almost didn’t preach from the NIV specifically because of that verse. I don’t think it’s translated very well. If you have an ESV Bible it’s going to be translated much better. If you read that verse—verse seventeen—***Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.*** That can sound like the prosperity gospel, like if you give, there’s going to be more given to your account...like your bank account. That’s what it kind of seems like on the first reading. What Paul is actually saying is ***Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more fruit would be added to your account.*** Like more fruit would develop in your life—that you would have more godliness, more righteousness. So, he’s saying I’m not excited that you’re going give so that you’ll get more money; he’s saying, I’m excited that you’re going to give because you’re going to develop more godly fruit in your life. So, I just wanted to clarify that verse for you. Verse eighteen: ***I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent. Your gifts are a fragrant offering and an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*** And that last phrase is what it’s all about—that’s what Paul is after. He wants the church at Philippi to please God. And the #2 thing that generous people believe is that generosity pleases God.

2. Generosity pleases God

Paul says it right there in the text. Their generosity pleased God. And, you know, all throughout scriptures it’s clear God really cares a lot about our money. He really, really wants us to be generous. There’s over two thousand verses in scripture about our money. But why does God care so much about my money? Why does He have to talk about it time after time after time? God can do anything He wants; He doesn’t need my money. Why is He talking about my money all the time? He can snap his fingers and make money appear. In fact, in the gospels there’s a story where Jesus makes money appear in the mouth of a fish. If Jesus can make money appear anywhere, why does He talk about my money so often? You see, He doesn’t want my money. He wants my heart. And God understands what we oftentimes don’t want to believe. That our hearts and our finances are closely connected. Because we love our money, because we think our money can give us what we actually want. And we think money can play the role only God can play. You see, instead of seeking out God for comfort, we seek out comfort in our bank account. Rather than seeking out God for satisfaction, we seek out our paycheck for satisfaction. Rather than seeking out our God for safety, we seek out our 401k for safety. And God desperately wants to set us free from this lie. This lie that money can do that which only God can do. God wants to set us free from this lie. You’ve got to believe this about God. That God’s mission is to set you free. And so many of us are held in chains to our money. In fact, Cyprian—

he's the bishop of Carthage in 3rd century AD—he said it better than I ever could. He said this about the people of his day. He said, “Their property held them in chains. They think of themselves as owners where it is, rather, they who are owned. Enslaved as they are of their own property. They are not the masters of their money but its slaves.” And I've got a friend who says it in another way. “I want you to have nice things. I don't want your nice things to have you.” And I think for many of us our things have us. They own us. And we know that they own us if it's like pulling teeth to give any of it away. And this is why Paul was so excited about the generosity of the church in Philippi. He's not saying, “I'm excited you've given me your money.” He's saying, “I'm excited that you've given God your heart.” Because every time you give money away, you remind your heart that God is your God and money is not. Whenever you give money away, you're reminding yourself that He's your provider. Your money's not your provider. Because you see, God doesn't want your money; He wants your heart. And when we give, it sets our hearts free from the bondage that we have to our money. And you know studies have shown this. Man, study after study after study—you can go online after and look it up—generous people are just genuinely happier people. It's because they're setting their hearts free from their love of money. So, the second thing that generous people believe is that generosity pleases God.

So, let's keep going in this passage and let's see how Paul concludes the book of Philippians. He says this in verse nineteen, ***And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*** As he's concluding this letter to Philippi he leaves them with one last thought. Right before he sends them off with all these different greetings for all these different people. He leaves them with one last thought. And it wasn't about their generosity; it was about God's generosity. Because he said, “My God will meet all your needs”. If you're going to remember anything else, remember this last thing I tell you, that my God will meet all your needs. Which is point #3. Generous people just believe that our God is generous.

3. God is generous

He is. This is what scripture tells us about who our God is. He doesn't withhold good things from us. He's not stingy towards you. In fact, Jesus said this in Matthew 7:9-11. He said, ***Which of you if your son asks you for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him?*** See God wants to, he even delights in, being generous towards you. And I don't think it's just like a type of spiritual generosity. I think there are times when He will be financially generous to you. Now that doesn't necessarily mean he's going to give you your own private jet or your own private island like you've seen a lot of TV pastors have. That's not what scripture's saying. Because look at what the text says. In verse nineteen, it says, ***and my God will meet all your needs.*** Paul doesn't say that He's going to meet all your wants. He says He'll meet all your needs. And that's not as fun. I mean it's so much easier to preach God's going to meet all your wants. Whatever you give, that's what you're going to get. Whatever you give, God's going to give you all your

wants, He's going to give you everything you could ever ask for or imagine for. That's just not the text. He says God will meet all your needs. And I think for us—I know for me—I think my needs are here but they're really here. I think my needs are here but they're really here. I'm prone to believe that I need what everyone else in Woodway needs. And I'm currently believing this lie because my wife and I we're pregnant with our firstborn daughter on the way in April. And that's so exciting. What I'm most terrified about isn't the fact that I'm going to lose sleep, it's not the fact that I'm going to lose my independence. It's just finances. I mean it's scary whenever you're welcoming a brand-new baby into the world because there's so much that she needs. In fact, a week ago my wife and I went to Target—that was the first time going to Target in forever—because she wanted me to check out the baby aisle. Well she lied because there's not a baby aisle, there are baby aisles. It's insane and she walked through all these different things that we need and we needed this type of stroller, and this type of crib, and this type of backpack that keeps things frozen, and this type of other thing. It's like what in the world she needs all of this? And then we left and I'm thinking if she needs all of that she also needs to be raised the same way I was. She needs to go on this many types of vacations, she needs me to pay for her Baylor tuition, she needs me to pay for her wedding. I mean, there's all these things that I'm already planning—that I have to pay for her because she needs them. But man, as I read this text, man it's just clear that those things aren't actually needs. What we actually need in this life is we need Jesus, we need food, water, shelter, clothing, beyond that? It's not really a need. It's a want. And for so many of us, man our needs are here but really they're actually here. And God said He's going to take care of them. He's going to give us food, water, clothing, shelter. He's already given us Jesus. There's nothing else we really need. And when we believe that, that God's going to be generous to meet all of our needs, man when we realize for most of us, not all of us but most of us, have much more excess than what we think we have and we trust that God will meet our needs it frees us up to be generous. And God will use us to meet the needs of others. So point #3 generous people just believe that our God is generous.

So, in summary, what can we learn from the generosity of the church in Philippi. There are three things. Three things that they believe that we also need to believe. Point #1 generosity is at the heart of the gospel. Point #2 generosity pleases God. And point #3 our God is generous. And you know you might be able to look at that list and say yeah I believe those things. But if we were to look at your bank account or your credit card statement, would we be able to say yes she believes those things, yes he believes those things. Or, instead, would we just see a life that's piling up cash for yourself or spending all your money on yourself. What would we see about the statements that you made? Do you believe what you said you believed? And church I just don't want you to have that same regret. That you'd look back on your finances and think I missed out on what God wanted to do through me. My money could have done more. I don't want you to have that same regret. And if we can learn to believe these three things that Paul says about the church in Philippi if we can believe these things about God and money it will change the way that we live and we give. And God will use us to advance His kingdom for his name and His glory. Well, now JP's going to come up and he's just going to give us a more detailed look about everything that's going on here at Harris Creek to give us a better financial picture about what God has done and what we believe God will continue to do. And I hope it's just a reminder that when you give generously towards the gospel, it has an eternal impact...oh what's up man! Hey. You're just sneaking up behind me.

Appreciate you, brother. There's just one thing you said that I want to clean up. Okay? Yeah, just one. He said a lot about 'your money.' God doesn't care about 'your money' and he says a lot about 'your money'. And I would just tell you God never addresses in the scripture 'your money.' And He doesn't care about 'your money' or he said it seems like he cares a lot about 'your money'. He doesn't care about your money; he cares about his money, right. It's all about his money. The cattle along a thousand hills belong to him. We're simply stewards of it. And so, the first thing—I'm going to be with you for just a few minutes—just to process kind of what this journey has looked like for us, our family, the state of the union here as we wrap up year 2020, an amazing year. Some challenges in the year, for sure, but it has been good for the church, fruitful for the church both nationally and here locally. And so, the first thing that I want you to know as we talk about the topic of generosity—and it's just God's kindness and provision that this is exactly where we would be in this text, it wasn't even planned, as we wrapped up the year here we are in Philippians—is that if you are a member of this church you will never have need. As long as we have resources, your needs will be met. No member of this church will ever live on the street as long as any one of us has an empty bed. No member of this church will ever be hungry as long as any one of us has a sandwich or a piece of bread in our pantry. You will never go without. And so, as we talk about generosity there's really two categories of people in season. There's those who have plenty and there's those who have need. And if you're here and you have need, please do not have need in isolation. Please let us know. I stand up here every week and say if there is anything you need e-mail us at hello@harris creek.org or come up because you're like well I don't even have e-mail, come up, right, and talk to us. And we have an entire team here. They're a team of brilliant men and women who are able to meet with you, look into kind of a dashboard of your life, where God has you, and find out how we as the church can best meet your needs and come around you and be the hands and feet of Jesus. What we want to be here is be a discipleship factory. Unapologetically—like what is his vision for the church? What are we trying to do? What are we trying to accomplish?—we want to make disciples. To help everyone follow Jesus by engaging the lost, equipping the saints, and empowering members for service—unapologetically that's our goal. And so, this building was built before our family got here, and opened without a pastor and you know God knew what He was doing but when we showed up here it was. And I'm reminded of a story of a friend of mine; I did a wedding. And my friend worked diligently. He's one of the responsible kind of people. He worked very hard to be debt free in his life. And then he met this amazing young woman and said I want to spend the rest of my life with her and so he got on one knee and proposed. I got to do the wedding. I had privilege—Monica and I got to do their premarital counseling—and what was true about this amazing young woman is she went to nursing school and accumulated \$135,000 in student loans. And he kept saying, "Her debt, her debt, her debt. You know, we've got to come up with a plan...her debt." And I just stopped him. And I said, "Buddy, this is not her debt. This is your debt. This is y'all's— as we can say in Texas—this is both of yours. You need to get your head and heart around that.

And as I drove down 35 two years ago with a moving truck following us, I felt prepared for just about everything that the Lord would have. I mean I had seen the church, I had been a part of an amazing church, I had watched God move through the local church. I was ready for whatever he was going to call me to do. There was one thing I was concerned about. There was one thing that, candidly, I had no experience in. Like, preaching? Yes. I had preached over four hundred sermons. But I had never in my life preached under the burden of debt. And that was a

real wrestle for me because I know that there's this thing that happens in America where preachers get up on the stage and they try to make you feel good and they try to entertain you so that you'll keep coming and you'll pay up and you'll keep the lights on and they in turn won't ask much of you and they water down the gospel and water down the scriptures so you're comfortable and you don't go anywhere and I'm never going to do that. And I prayed to the Lord on the way down here on the highway, no joke on the highway down here, 'Lord please don't ever let me do that. I want to preach your word faithfully. I want to preach about your character faithfully. I want to call people to know you faithfully, to engage in your word faithfully. Lord, please don't ever let me cower down.' But the second we changed our zip code, the debt of Harris Creek became our debt. And I set our family down, children and all and said just 'Hey, we need to think through what are changes that we are going to make in our lives so that we can faithfully and generously support this church with the Lord's resources. And that is something we are continuing to think about in our immediate family. And so, I want to be clear. I don't think debt is a sin and I don't think debt is wrong. In fact, I am incredibly thankful for the financial institution that allowed us to build this discipleship factory when the resources weren't there. This place was for so many of you—you've joined, you've become a part of this movement since then—and this place was built for you. People went before you and built this place so that God could continue to change your life here, invest in your children here, invest in your marriage here, invest in and through you so that you can invest in your communities here.

But so, everyone is clear, and so you know, and hopefully you got the e-mail this week...if you didn't or if you didn't read it... go back and check because it has all of this information in there. And so, you should have gotten an e-mail. If you didn't, e-mail us at hello@harris.org and we'll make sure you get it. It has a video, beautiful pictures, and all kinds of things that our team has worked hard on to communicate clearly with you. We have 5.9 million dollars in debt here at Harris Creek. Most of that is from this building that we're sitting in right now and the equipment that we are using so that you can hear this message right now. Now, I was talking with a friend last night and sometimes I feel manipulated when churches talk about money in December. And it's like hey we have so much need and please give if you get a bonus and this and that...that's not my heart at all. I want you to know I have no concern. I'm not saying this because I have need. The Lord owns all of the resources. I'm saying this so that as you're a part of this family, we're all soberly aware of what it is that we're doing. Because while debt is not sin and it's not wrong, it is limiting.

And there are things that I would love to move towards faithfully doing that we cannot do as we seek to be free from that. And I think it's a fair question to say well what are those things? I want to focus all the more on local and international ministry. This year I would like to hire somebody full time who is focused on taking families overseas both for short-term and long-term. You call them missions, disciple-opportunities that you would go into different parts of the globe, carrying the gospel, some of those parts don't currently have it. Some of you are hearing me right now from different places around the world because of the generous investment in technology in and through this place. I want to focus on church planting. And so, a huge part of my heart is that I want to raise up pastors, preachers, and teachers. I love—a hobby of mine is to teach communication, the science of preaching and teaching the Bible. And so, we're going to raise up preachers and teachers out of this place and then, I hope, send them to other parts of the country to grow and develop healthy churches. These are things that I want to see happen here.

Another one is a residency program, that we would bring in some of the sharpest students from around the world, that they would come here and we would begin to invest in them, similar to a seminary but in partner with seminary. I believe they would get seminary credits for this and that we could teach them what it looks like to do ministry by showing them in a hands-on way, that you can't learn in the classroom. And then lastly, economic development and education, that we would find some of the sharpest people that are a part of this body, that understand how to start businesses and engage communities and that we would go into different places that are hurting and that we would create jobs, that we would start businesses, that we would invest in those communities through the resources that the Lord has provided here. And so, I believe without that distraction those are some of the things that we could move towards.

I was recently in Colorado with a group of pastors and so there was this pastor's gathering there. And Todd Peterson spoke to us. I didn't know who that was. You might. He was in the NFL; he was a kicker. He was like the NFL man of the year in 1996. But now he's known for benevolence in generosity in just the way that he takes the resources that the Lord has entrusted to him, he multiplies them, and he unleashes them for kingdom purposes. And as he was addressing us he said this thing, he said, "Generosity is the greatest Christian apologetic of our time." And I sat there and I began to listen to that and I was wrestling with that and was like do I believe that's true? Like well the empty tomb is a pretty good apologetic. Evidence that God is real and that Jesus is King, Christianity is the greatest apologetic of our time. And I thought for sure. In a world so given to materialism, that people would say I'm going to follow this man and give generously to his values and ideals and support the ministry that he is about. I bet that does move the hearts of nonbelievers. I bet that is real and true evidence of our faith. And so, I know that pastors and I'm certainly guilty of this we all have turned on the TV and we've seen where the church has totally botched it in the area of finances. I want you to know that I am committed to complete and total transparency here. That we will answer any question that you have at any time, that we will do everything we can to communicate well with you. See also that e-mail was an effort to that end.

But I don't stand up here with the insecurity of like man what are they going to think. I stand up here more like I imagine Elon Musk must have felt when he realized man he can make this car go without gasoline and he's kind of figuring out this battery and he kind of like man I think we're kind of on to something big. And I imagine he called his friends and his family close and said look here's the deal, this is going to be huge I want you to be in the inside. I want you to know. And that's how I feel about what God is doing here. I don't know that I've ever seen anything like it. I think He's doing it in spite of me, and in spite of many of us, that He is showing—it's the same way that he defeats giants with eighteen-year-old boys. It's just what he does. He stacks the cards against himself so he can flex. And He's chosen this church in McGregor, Texas to start to impact the world in amazing ways. And so, where I sit... I'm so excited to continue to support this mission. As Nate was talking, I got up, you may have seen me. I may have distracted you. I ran to my office because once upon a time I bought several of these—this is a widow's mite. And so, it's a literal widow's mite. And I bought them as a reminder to me because I am guilty and susceptible to things of this world taking root of my heart. And so, I bought them and I keep them in my office as a reminder of me. A widow's mite was at a value less than a penny and today I bought this for twenty bucks, right. Twenty dollars. And I was thinking about that, that's—Kenny will help me out with this—that's a two thousand percent

return? Is that right? A penny...Kelly? Somebody. Is that right? Two thousand? Well, you guys don't know anyways so I'm just going to say that's a two thousand percent return. I was going to say that and I thought surely somebody's going to e-mail me and tell me it's not two thousand, it's actually. Two thousand percent return. And I was thinking why? Why did this increase by two thousand percent? For no other reason than she faithfully gave it. That's it. Because some woman in history said I trust God and I want to support his mission and ministry in this way and He took it and He multiplied it and He used it and now we read about it and we're inspired by it. My friend said last night, he said, "You know, I don't think we should ever ask the church for money. I think we should just pray." Like George Mueller if you know who that is. And there's a fine line. Like how do you communicate well with people, keep them in the know, let them know what the needs are, what's going on, but I tend to agree with him. So, really my only ask of you...we're not going to pass a plate or anything like that but what I am going to do is I'm going to give you just a minute to pray for this church. Would you just do that? I'm going to do that up here. Let's just take a minute and let's just sit in silence and ask God to bless this place, to raise up all the resources that we need to do all the ministry that He desires for us to do because He will. He will. I'm certain of it. So, let's just pray.

Father, what Nate got very, very right is that you want our hearts. And so, Father would you start with me, just even as our family processes moving and buying Christmas gifts and thinking about how to steward your resources, Lord would you start with me? Would you make all the changes in my life that you need to make. Help me to be the best leader and the best servant of these people that I can possibly be and especially in the way that our family stewards your resources. And Lord I pray that generosity would mark this church in the way it marked the church in Philippi two thousand years ago, that we would send our Epaphroditus', our Timothy's, that we would find our Lydia's, and that we would resource your Church around the country, that we would start and pour into and build healthy expressions of your local body. Father, I know that you will meet all of our needs, in and through the glorious riches of your son Jesus Christ. I believe that with all of my heart. I have no doubt in that, God. If there's doubt in my heart, if there's doubt in their heart would you remove it, God. And help us to continue to celebrate acts of faithfulness in and through this body. We love you. In the name of Jesus. Amen.