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[*Introductory video begins with board-game tokens moving around while Scrabble® tiles (letters) move together to spell out the words START SOMETHING. The scene changes to show several Monopoly tokens on a Monopoly board talking to each other with a tall stack of Monopoly money beside them.*]

[*Dog game-token:*] So, let me make sure I understand your plan of escape. We're going to give the humans all of this [referring to the stack of *Monopoly* money] in order to secure our freedom?

[*Hat game-token speaks with a British accent:*] That is correct. Humans love this stuff. They trade it for things.

[*Iron game-token:*] Like what?

[*Hat:*] Important things like houses and hotels and railroad stock.

[*Blue car game-token:*] Like a new car?

[*Pink car game-token:*] Ewwwww, I like that one over there.

[*Blue car:*] That is a sweet ride; I'll take it. [Cash register rings; stack of money gets smaller.]

[*Dog:*] Hey, actually I can use a new dog house. [Cash register rings; stack of money gets smaller.]

[*Hat:*] Wait, stop taking the money. [Red and Blue game-tokens slide into the scene.] Oh great, not you guys too.

[*Red game-token speaks with a hillbilly accent:*] Yeah, we need to buy a gift to tell someone we're sorry. [Cash register rings; stack of money gets smaller.]

[*Hat:*] Huh uh. Hey, wait. [Cash register rings several more times; stack of money gets smaller with each ring.]

[*Blue game-token:*] Yeah, we're really, really, really sorry. [Cash register rings continually until the stack of money is gone.]

[*Hat:*] Great! Now what am I going to do?

[*At video's end the series graphic superimposes over the scene; then Pastor Sal begins:*]

Hey, by the way, if you're ever playing *Monopoly* and the pieces start talking; call 9-1-1 immediately, all right?

Hey, I want to talk to you today about a different way of approaching our economic climate in which we live. Right now people are absolutely afraid of what *is* happening and afraid of what *might* happen. Because of that, we're (kind of) paralyzed and aren't able to trust God in one of the most important areas of life; and that's, our finances. In this economy, if—

- Listening to everybody (and)
- Listening to the news (and)
- Watching the economic indicators

—you would think that you’re a pink slip and a couple bad investments away from being totally destitute. That’s looking at the current circumstances.

What God has called us to do is to look at things a little bit differently than everybody else looks at things. We are to look at things the way that God sees things. If not, we are going to live in fear. We’re going to look at the evidence that we see and we’re going to say: That’s reality and because that’s reality, I’m going to adjust the way that I am doing my giving so that I can protect myself.

Now, fear and faith run on parallel tracks. Faith overcomes fear. Do you remember last week when we were talking about faith? And I said: Here’s my current reality. (Those of you [who] are at *Fry Road [Campus]*, I’m going to step off the stage but I didn’t leave. I’ll be right back. All right?) So, this is my current reality and I don’t like my current reality. Then God—through His Word—tells me:

- What my reality really ought to be like (and)
- What He wants to do in my life (and)
- The promises that He makes

That’s way out there in the future. So I start acting now like that reality is going to be mine. So I walk by faith toward that which God tells me I ought to be doing. When I do that (I’m back)—when I do that—then I begin to receive the things that God has for me. *Or* we can say: I really want to do that, God, but I’m so afraid so I’m (just) going to wait. Well, that doesn’t change your current reality.

What I want to talk to you today is about giving in a new way—without fear:

- Without fear of not going to have enough
- Without fear of what’s going to happen in old age
- Without fear of what if my 401(k) tanks (whatever that thing is and)
- Without fear of all of my things that I’ve invested in:
  - My house losing value (and)
  - My kids costing more money

—without any of that fear. How would you like to get up every morning with a smile on your face and it really didn’t matter what the stock market did? Because you’ve got an investment strategy that no matter what this economy says, you’ve got an economy that’s a whole lot better than that.

## **A NEW WAY OF GIVING: NO FEAR**

Now, what I’m going to share with you is right out of the Bible. What I’m going to share with you aren’t my ideas, because I would have never thought of something like this. What I want to share with you is exactly what God wants you to be in on: His economic realities for you as a believer. So if we’re not careful, here’s what fear is going to do to us. Fear is going to distort the goodness of God.

## **FEAR DISTORTS THE GOODNESS OF GOD**

It’s going to distort the goodness of God. Jesus told a story about a man who was going to go away on business. He left his managers in charge. He gave them each some money. He said: Now invest this and do business until I come back. So he comes back after a period of time and he starts to ask for an accounting. Three of the guys did great. (I mean) some of them doubled. Some made half as much. They all progressed. [*Matthew 25:14-23* (summarized)] Then one guy comes and he says:

<sup>24</sup> ...'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man... <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

*Matthew 25:24-25 (NIV)*

In other words, he said: I was so afraid that I was going to lose and I wasn't going to gain that I did nothing. I kept it all to myself.

Fear imprisons us. We get inside and we lock the door; because we are so afraid that bad things are going to happen that we don't act out in faith in the way that God wants us to live.

His financial security in every one of those instances—of those four people—was a relationally based security, not a circumstantially based security. Because in the same circumstance—

- The other three went out (and)
- They did business (and)
- They gained what their master wanted them to gain

—because of the way they viewed their master. But this guy is afraid and he thinks that something is going to be taken from him, so he doesn't do anything.

I want to assure you today that in heaven God has for us these rich reserves of financial security that—

- You do not have to be afraid
- You don't have to close yourself off (that)
- You can trust God to do what God said He would do in your life

—if we do what God wants us to do. So here's how you overcome fear. You overcome financial fear by faith in God's economy.

## **OVERCOME FINANCIAL FEAR BY FAITH IN GOD'S ECONOMY**

Now here's what the Bible teaches (and I believe it):

- God owns everything
- God gives everything (and)
- God distributes everything

In other words, as a believer, here's what I believe: I believe God owns it all. Then God gives it all to me—everything that I need and then some. Then God distributes it through me as He sees fit to keep His kingdom running.

Now a couple of years ago I taught you those motions. Look:

- God owns it all (my hands are up and open)—God owns it all
- God gives it all to me [hands are fisted at shoulder level] (and)
- God distributes it all through me [hands are opened and stretched out to each side]

So I want you to do that with me. Put your hands up in the air like this. (I know you might feel silly, but you'll remember this.) Say this with me:

- God owns it all [hands are up and open]
- God gives it all [hands are fisted at shoulder level]
- God distributes it all [hands are open and to the sides].

All right? Now that's how it works. [Demonstrating the three motions again for emphasis:] God owns it all. God gives it all (don't slap your neighbor). God distributes it all. That's how God works.

Now, if God owns it all and God controls it all, then we know that we are never going to be without that which we need to do what God wants us to do. We get in trouble when we don't do what God wants us to do. God owns it all. God gives it all—and [if] I keep it here [hands fistted at chest level], God won't give you much more. God wants to distribute it all.

Now, how are you supposed to do this? There [are] two types of givers:

- People [who] give right off the top (and)
- People [who] give off the bottom

Now what do I mean? If God owns it all and He gives it to me, then—

- First thing I'm going to do is say: God, where do You want some of this to go?
- Now if not, I'm going to say: God owns it all. God's given it to me and I'm going to make sure all of my needs are taken care of first. And then whatever I have left over, then I'm going to give a little bit out of that.

The problem with that: If you don't take it off the top (it's like anything else), at the end you're going to be afraid that you don't have enough to give and you're not going to give. But if we can trust God with our eternal soul (and that's what a majority of you have done—haven't you?), you're trusting in this God that you can't see:

- That His Word is true (and)
- That when you die—because you've given your life to Christ—
  - You're not going to go to hell
  - You're not going to be separated from God
  - You're going to go to a place called heaven where you will be rewarded for what you have done down here in this life.

If we believe that God can take care of our soul—and that's rational because it's right in the Word—it is irrational to believe that God can't take care of us financially. That's fear. That's just simply fear and fear always drives out faith.

So, we can overcome our financial fear by putting faith in God's economy. In other words, when I give right off the top (when God gives to me), here's what I'm saying:

- God, it's Your responsibility to take care of me.
- It's my responsibility to finance the work of Your kingdom, because that's why You've given me this stuff.

If you wait until all of your needs are met and you don't have hardly anything left over, here's what you say:

- God, it's my responsibility to take care of me.
- It's Your responsibility to somehow to take care of all of this other stuff.

Now you've got it flipped around. You've locked God on the outside and you've locked yourself on the inside to take care of your financial need.

Now, if I were you and you're doing that—

- I would really want God to be my financial partner (and)
- I would really want God to be the One who is going to take care of me

—because He owns it all and He'll give it all if I will distribute it the way that God wants me to. So here's the principle. Are you ready?

## HOW MUCH YOU GIVE DETERMINES HOW MUCH YOU GET BACK

How much you give determines how much you get back. It's called the law of the harvest. It's the law of sowing. In *II Corinthians 9* he goes through and he talks about giving and he compares it to a farmer who is sowing seed.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.

*II Corinthians 9:6 (NIV)*

Now all throughout the Bible—

- You'll find it in *Galatians*
- You'll find it in the Gospels
- You'll find it in the *Old Testament*

Here's what I know for sure: you'll always reap what you sow—whatever you sow—it's going to come back to you.

In *Galatians* it says:

- If you sow to the flesh—if you live a life that is carnal, that is not godly, that is constantly sinning—you're going to get that back.
- If you sow to the Spirit—if you do the things God's asking you to do, if you live a Spirit-filled life, if you treat people the way you're supposed to treat them—then that's going to come back to you.

You always reap *what* you sow. [*Galatians 6:7-9 (paraphrased)*]

You'll always reap *where* you sow. Some of our marriages and relationships are bad, because we are sowing bad seed into that—

- We're not treating people right
- We're not loving our spouses the way that we need to
- We're not raising our kids the way that they need to be raised

—because that is going to come back to you.

Whatever you sow you're going to reap; and where you sow you're going to reap.

You're always going to reap *more* than you sow. (I mean) look at the farmer. The farmer plants seed. Now when he plants that seed and he drops a seed of corn into the ground, it's going to produce what?—one ear of corn? If it does, you need to get out of the farming business.

How many of y'all have ever planted a garden? How many tomatoes?—everybody does tomatoes, right? When you put that tomato plant in there and—

- You work with it (and)
- You fertilize it (and)
- You water it

—do you expect to get one tomato out of the plant? No! Man, you ought to get enough that you're bringing *me* some tomatoes at the end of the day! Why?—because I didn't invest in this tomato plant for one tomato. It's not designed to do that.

- It's designed to produce multiple tomatoes.
- It's designed to produce multiple ears of corn.

- It's designed to produce multiple kernels of wheat.

The seed goes in the ground; it is planted in the ground. God does what He does with seeds and all of a sudden there's an abundant harvest.

So a sower is going to scatter as much seed as he can. Because the more he invests the more he's going to get back. God gives you financial seed for you to sow. How much you sow determines how much you get back.

Now, you ought to expect a harvest. What are you expecting from God? Because you have been sowing, what are you expecting from God? What need do you have? Because you have been doing what God's asked you to do with your money—you've been faithfully giving and faithfully sowing, you can expect God to do some things:

- You can expect God to take care of your needs.
- You can expect God to provide a job.
- You can expect—if you have been sowing into the lives of other people and you've been loving them, then—love is going to come back to you.
- If you have been witnessing to people and sharing Christ and you've got lost family members somewhere, you can expect God to send somebody to them.

Whatever you sow, you're going to reap. What are you expecting? (What are you expecting?)

Here's what I expect—financially—I expect God's going to take care of me. I expect that God is going to continue to replenish my finances because I have been faithful to distribute those finances where God wants them. Now I can honestly tell you that probably about 80 percent of what God gives me still remains with me. But I know for sure at least 20 percent of it goes out and gets distributed the way that God wants it distributed. Now, if I still continue wanting to have that level of income, then I've got to continue to trust God and distribute the way God wants me to distribute. So I can expect that God's going to take care of me.

Now if you knew that somebody was contributing to you and you could do something to help them, wouldn't you help them so they'd still contribute to you? God says: I'm going to take care of you. I just want you to distribute the way that I want it distributed. How much you give determines how much you get back.

Now, don't think of giving as: I'm losing something. Because in the world they say: You gave that? Why did you give that money, are you crazy? Well (you know) one of the only times I've ever been questioned on income tax was the amount of money that we gave—only time. And they just—you know:

They said: Hey, that's a lot of money (the guy [who] was doing my taxes).

I said: Well, there [are] all the receipts.

He said: Well, they're going to probably flag that because that's unusual.

Do you know?—

- Only one-third to one-half of people, on any given Sunday, who go to church give anything?
- Out of that, only 3 to 5 percent of those [who] give, give one-tenth of their income?
- (Do you know) proportionately, people gave more (that were in church) in the Great Depression than we give right now, even though we are exponentially in front of them in earnings?

That's a heart problem. We can't expect God to do these great and wonderful things for us if God can't trust us to distribute out what He wants us to do with the money that He has given to us.

Now here's what faith says—

- Faith says: God, I know You're going to take care of me. So right off the top I'm giving to You. And I'm going to distribute it the way that You want because I believe you own it all. You're going to give me exactly what I need. I'm going to distribute it the way that You want.
- Here's what fear says: Lord, here's what I'm going to do. If you do such-and-such then I will give a little bit. That's fear.
- Faith says: God, I anticipate You're going to take care of me because I trust you at Your Word.

Second thing: How much you give determines how much God does through you.

## **HOW MUCH YOU GIVE DETERMINES HOW MUCH GOD DOES THROUGH YOU**

*Chapter 9 in 2 Corinthians, verse 9:*

As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

*2 Corinthians 9:9 (NIV)*

Now, why did He stick that in there? Because there are two things I know for sure that God is concerned about—and will be concerned about—until Jesus Christ comes back.

1. God loves poor people. And little children without any food to eat, God expects that we're going to help out in that. (And secondly)
2. God is concerned about the spiritual well-being of everybody on this earth. And that's why He gave us the Great Commission, to go and make disciples.

So what do we do as a church? We help the poor and we make disciples. That's God's heart. Those things cost money. God knows that, and He knows how we feel about money; because He owns it all, He gives it all, and He distributes it all through us. And so, if everyone in our church—think about this for a moment—if everyone in our church gave the way that you gave, what would our church be like? Maybe you'd say:

- Man, we'd be rich!
- Man, we'd be broke!

Which one would it be?

What if you weren't sitting in this pew, but you were sitting on a dirt floor somewhere without a mom and a dad? If that were you, could you depend upon the you-that's-sitting-in-the-pew-right-now to give enough so that you would hear the Gospel and you would be fed? Because really, what's the difference? The difference is we were born here and they were born there. They're poor and we are not. In fact, let me just say this: I'm rich! You're rich!

- You've got a house or an apartment
- You've got clothes
- You know where your next meal is going to come from
- You have a car. Some of you have two, three, or four cars
- You're putting kids through college

We are rich!

We don't give to get rich. We give because:

- We're Christians (and)
- Our Heavenly Father has provided for us (and)
- He's concerned for the things of this world (and)
- He wants to do it through our church

That's why we give.

## **WHEN YOU GIVE GOD WHAT HE WANTS HE GIVES YOU WHAT YOU NEED AND MORE**

Look, this isn't me. Look, I'm not trying to trick you to get your money. Dude, if God can't get you to give, I certainly can't get you to give. I'm telling you: here's some promises that you can have. How would you like to be financially free and financially fearless? When you give God—when you give to God, He gives you what you need and more.

Look what He says in *2 Corinthians 9:11* [NIV:]

You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion...

Why would God bless you?—because He wants you to be generous. Why?—because God's generous. God gave us Jesus—right off the top, the best He could give—and He will give us everything else with Him.

And so if we will do what God says and we will become generous, then what will happen is that God will continue to bless us. God is not going to drain your resources when you give, and not replenish them. Here's how I know: God can trust me. Because God can trust me, every time I give, I know it's coming back. I know it's coming back. Because He just wants a faithful steward to be a conduit so whatever He has and what He gives will properly be distributed.

Here's what Jesus said in *Luke 6:38*—

Give, {it's what Jesus said: Give} and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, [and running over,] will be poured {overflowing} into your lap....

*Luke 6:38a (NIV)*

In other words, God says: You give me this little bit and here's what I'm going to do:

- I'm going to take your life (and)
- I'm going to pour some stuff in (and)

- I'm going to shake it up (and)
- I'm going to pack it down (and)
- I'm going to put some more in and shake it up and pack it down.
- I'm going to vacuum seal it so that none of it gets out, so that you can be blessed beyond imagination.

Now, you can either trust this economy, or we can trust God's economy. And God's got all the money—He owns it all. He gives it all. He distributes it all—and He will bless you if you give. But He can't if you don't. You have to prove yourself trustworthy.

You know, here's how it works: That "give and it shall be given", just the sowing and the deal—before church started this morning, I was in the ready room and I heard a couple of our security guys talking. One of them said: Yeah, man, I went to the game last night. I got to walk on the sidelines. And then he mentioned this other guy's name, who happens to be a friend of mine who goes to this church. And I said: Dang, man! I told the men: Come in here! You know, dude, I'd love to walk on that sideline with you sometime. I'd love to have that ministry with you. (In other words I said: Give me! Get me in there! Get me on the sidelines!) And do you know what he said?—He said: Your being on that sideline with me is directly proportional to me being out there fishing with you.

"Give and it shall be given unto you;" [Luke 6:38 (KJV)] So, God, give me! I need! God knows you need. And [He] meeting your need will be directly proportional to the amount in which He can trust you to give to others who are in need.

That's how we finance this church. How do you think we get this money? Do you think that I just call my family in Las Vegas and say: Hey, I'm sending you some money—three-team parlay—we need to make the bills! No! No! You—God owns it all. He gives it all. He'll distribute it all—and He will continue to give to you.

Now, all right, here's the—do you know what real true wealth is? It's not having so much that you build it up. True wealth is having everything you need when you need it. God has promised to do that. Everything you need when you need it.

I just want to be a good manager. I just want at the end of my life to have distributed enough to where—

- The Gospel got shared.
- Poor people had something to eat.
- Orphans were taken care of.
- Our church went forward.
- We saw God do some great things among us.

But we've got to take God at His word!

So here's what I'm going to invite you to do: First of all, we gave you another packet of material when you came in: (kind of) a devotional and another die—now, you have two. (I trust you not to gamble, all right?) Get this commitment card out. I want to walk through it with you, all right? I know your heart just started beating and you're saying: Oh, God, I knew he was going to do this. He's going to try to get my money.

You know what? I don't want your money. I want you to have God as your financial partner. I want you not to fear the economy. I want God to do such a supernatural work in your life that you are actually content and you eagerly await what God is going to do through you because of all the blessing that He's given to you. All right, here's how you invite God to be your financial partner:

## **INVITE GOD TO BE YOUR FINANCIAL PARTNER:**

### **1. PRIORITIZE KINGDOM GIVING**

*Matthew 6:31 through 33:*

<sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' {What's going to happen? What about my 401(k)? What about my job? What about a raise? What about the future and my kids and college? You know, all of that stuff. Jesus said—} <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, {the whole world drives on those things} and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. {Now, listen. Again, this is Jesus talking—He said, "Your Heavenly Father knows you need this, but"—do what?—seek Him} <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these {other} things will be given to you [as well].

*Matthew 6:31-33 (NIV)*

In other words, if you put God first He puts you first. If you say: God, you can trust me to take care of Your kingdom needs. God says: Then you can trust Me to take care of that stuff that everybody else is worrying about, and you won't have to be fearful of the future. God wants to be your financial resource and your partner. Now [the] second thing is:

## **INVITE GOD TO BE YOUR FINANCIAL PARTNER:**

### **2. PRACTICE PERCENTAGE GIVING**

*2 Corinthians 9:7—*

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

*2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV)*

Now feeling this [trembling:] U-u-ugh! That [isn't] me and that's not the spirit of God; that's fear. If you've got to be coerced into doing something and you can't do it out of a heart—even if you're trembling—say: God, I'm going to trust You anyway. Do it. But if you feel like someone is putting pressure on you to give—you know what?—don't do it (quite frankly). Because if that's not coming from God and you can't hear God in His Bible, then there's a deeper problem. Maybe you need to know God. Maybe you need to have a Heavenly Father.

"Each man should give..." Why?—because He wants you to be joyful. God loves a hilarious giver. Rather than worrying at night and losing sleep, why don't—every time the offering plate comes by—you go: Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Oh, hay! I'm writing a check today, God. Oh! Ho-ho, I'm killing myself here. Oh man! Whoa! That felt so—ha-ha!—can you believe we just gave that, honey? Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! I can't wait to see what God's going to do with this one. Rather than [despairingly saying:] Oh,

God...oh, oh, this hurts so much. Oh God! Can I make change? [Pantomimes the offering plate going by:] Oh don't, no-no-no, wait, wait.

Man!—do you know why it's hilarious? Because right off the top you say: God, look here [lifting open hands up]. This just feels good. It just gives me great joy to do this; because You are my financial partner right now.

Look, I want to read this verse to you—only verse in the Bible—God says: I dare you. Test Me. Come on! Dare you and see if I'm not right on this. Here's what God says:

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this."... {This is a no-fail deal right here: Test Me!} "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

*Malachi 3:10 (NIV)*

Rather than have this scarcity, what's-going-to-happen-to-me mentality; grab God's mentality—the flood gates! Do you know what happens when flood gates are opened? Floods come. Lots of water. Things move. He said I will open them up and you won't have enough room to hold everything. And you're going to be giving more away than you've ever given before. Test Me. Come on, step across the line. I double-dog dare you; is what God is saying.

Now, if you don't want to get blessed, don't do this.

- If you want to live in fear
- If you want to live in scarcity
- If you want to believe that the sky is falling
- If you don't want to have enough to meet your needs

...be your own financial partner and listen to what the government wants you to do.

Or you can listen to your Heavenly Father and have so much you don't know what to do with it. I'd like to be in that position and—quite frankly—I am. I am—not because I'm smarter or something—it's just...

- God owns it all.
- God gives it all.
- God distributes it all.

Now, why 10 percent? Well, because God said so. (I don't know the reason.) Because that's a reminder to us: God owns everything.

In other words, God gives you ten \$1 bills. Here's \$10 [then says:] Can I have one of those? Sure, God; here. Then He gives you \$1000 and says: Can I have 10 percent of that? [You say:] Here's \$100, God. Then He gives you \$10,000 and says: Can I have 10 percent? [You say:] Here's \$1000, God. Then He gives you \$100,000 and you say: Wait a minute, God, that's a lot of money. Then God says: Okay, I'll bring you back down to \$10,000; you obeyed a whole lot better at \$10,000. [You'll say:] No-no-no, God; here's \$10,000. Give me the \$100,000; You can trust me, God. Because if you make \$10,000, \$20,000 or \$50,000; 10 percent is 10 percent. It's all just a percentage where everybody has the opportunity to give an equal amount at a percentage. That's what God says.

Now, that ought to be part of your worship every week that you bring that. So, here's what I'm going to ask you to do: if you've never done it before, test God. He said it. I'm just telling you what He said. He said—test Him. Test Him for 90 days and if it doesn't work, quit giving. Quit giving. Then—you know what?—if that doesn't work and that's a lie, [then] everything else is a lie. And you might as well take up golf on Sunday, honestly.

Either God can or He can't. And isn't it time that we drew the line—you did in your life—and say: God, I've got to trust You here. This is killing me. I'm going to trust You. I'm going to give you 90 days, God, because You said test You. Please don't strike me with lightning because I only gave you 90 days. But that's how big my faith is right now. So, God, show me in 90 days that You're able to fling open the floodgates. Would You do that? (Would You do that?) If so, check the box: Obeying, you can count on me—90 days—no big deal; I'll do it. Or big deal and [you say:] Dear God, help me.

Then secondly, some of y'all have been giving and been giving faithfully. Thank you! We could not do what we do if you had not been giving. So I want to say—number one: thank you. And I'll bet you God is blessing you somehow.

(You know what?) When God blesses it's just not financial; it's what He keeps from you sometimes. Because He doesn't have to (like) discipline you, He just keeps on blessing you. If that's the case and you've been giving, maybe you would think about increasing—be a little more progressive in your giving.

We've got a big budget shortfall. Around here we don't spend what we don't have. So there [are] a lot of things that we're not doing now, that we believe God wanted us to do when we set that budget. And now we just don't do it. Maybe you just need to (kind of) make up—some of you [who] haven't been giving—for all of the stuff that we're in arrears for right now. We don't spend what we don't have. So the operating budget: we operate on exactly what God gives us.

Now, some of you don't even have a job—some. Here's what I believe:

- God wants to take care of you.
- God has a job for you,
- He has good works planned for you.
- He has a place for you to be.
- He wants to meet the needs that you have.

Just check: I don't have a job. And let us pray for you. Tell your *Small Group*: Hey, I don't have a job; pray for me. (You know) tell the guy next to you: I don't have a job, are you a boss? Can you hire me, brother? Whoever sees a brother in need, don't tell me to be warm and be fed; help me out here. And we will as much as we can.

Now, some of you are so much in debt, every dime you have goes to paying interest on credit cards and stuff. You've not been a good steward. God can't trust you with much right now. That's why we have the *Financial Peace University* going on. We're going to have a preview of it right after this service. I challenge you: get in there. If you can't give 10 percent right now—you ought to. But if you're so tight that if you did that you'd have to file bankruptcy, can you give \$5...\$3...\$2...\$1—a dollar a week?—anything that says: God, I'm trying; help me out of this jam that I got in. Whatever your commitment is put it on that card. And then put it in the offering plate when the offering plate comes by.

Trust God. Man, God has stuff. God has so much for us. He owns it all. He'll give it all if we'll distribute it all. Allow Him to do that through us. This could be the beginning of a whole new economy for you. And I pray that you would trust God with that.

Let's pray together as our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed:

God, thank You. Thank You so much that You say You can take care of us. Lord, so much of our energy goes on the what-ifs of life. And the what-ifs—it doesn't matter, because You're there and You're going to take care of us.

I want to pray for my brothers and sisters [who] are in this room and are going to step out for the first time and say:

- Yes, I am going to trust God.
- I'm going to give.
- I'm going to sow seed.
- I'm going to trust God for the first time.

I pray You'd bless them. And then in the next 90 days, Lord, You would throw open the floodgates and bless them in ways beyond financial, Lord. Bless their marriages and their homes and their hearts and do away with their anxieties. And just bless them, God, so that they know that You are blessing their obedience.

Thank You for the ones here, God, [who] have been giving faithfully and have done [so] for a long time. Thank You. Continue to bless them, Lord. If they (so) choose to up the percentage that they're giving, bless them for that, God.

Lord, I just pray for those of us [who] are in such financial bondage right now. I pray those folks would get in that *Financial Peace University*. I pray that they would learn how:

- You can control their finances (and)
- You can bless them (and)
- No matter what their income level is, You can make them rich beyond their wildest imaginations just by obeying you, God.

For those who are struggling right now and looking for work and those [who] own their own business and need more business to come in: God, I pray by the power of your Spirit that You would anoint Your people. I pray that You would give them exactly what they need. I pray that You would open up opportunities they never have even seen before; because of their desire to serve You and do what is right; and because You said, God, we didn't have to worry about food and clothing and shelter and stuff like that. That if we would look after You first that You would look after us. Now, Heavenly Father, I pray that those brothers and sisters would see that promise come through. God bless these people so You could bless Your Church.

God, if we don't have Jesus, it doesn't matter how much money we give. Because we weren't redeemed with silver and gold and perishable things from our futile way of life, but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

If you don't know Jesus this morning I'm going to ask you to silently say this prayer as I do aloud. If you want to give your life to Christ, if you want to make an investment that lasts for eternity, then I'm going to ask you to pray this prayer and it goes like this:

Dear God, save me. I believe Jesus died for me. More than I need money, I need eternal salvation. Thank You for Your blood that washes away my sin. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[*Scott Rodgers, Jones Road Campus Pastor, joins Pastor Sal on the stage:*]

[*Scott:*] All right! [*Addressing Pastor Sal:*] Say, can you stay here for just one second?

[*Sal:*] Sure.

[*Scott:*] Is it okay if I put Pastor Sal on the spot?

[*Congregational response:*] Yes...amen!

[*Sal:*] They liked that...look.

[*Scott, encouraging applause:*] Come on, support me here—there we go. (The biggest thing we're going to get to in just a moment if you prayed that prayer and asked Christ in your life. I want to talk to you for just a moment after this.) [*Addressing Pastor Sal:*] But tell us how long you've been a believer, a Christian, a follower of Christ (whatever you want to say)?

[*Sal:*] Thirty-one years.

[*Scott whistles:*] Wasn't that when a man walked on the moon—he first walked on the moon?

[*Sal:*] Almost...

[*Scott:*] ...something like that.

[*Sal:*] ...before computers.

[*Scott:*] Oh, that was '69...okay. So, do you remember when you first began to tithe? And maybe [*you remember*] a little bit about what that was like and what was going on inside of you; because I'm assuming that's a big step.

[*Sal:*] Oh yeah.

[*Scott:*] That's a big step for a lot of us.

[*Sal:*] Yep, I remember it. The one overwhelming emotion that I had was just joy and anticipation. God had just given me a job. I'd prayed. God gave me a job. I had a steady income. I remember taking—it must have been (like) \$100 maybe or \$150 or something like that.

[*Scott:*] Back then that was...

[Sal:] That was big dollars.

[Scott:] ...big stuff.

[Sal:] I put it in an envelope. I didn't even put my name on it, because I'd read somewhere: Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. And so I didn't even let them know in the church office what I was doing. I threw that cash in there and it was (like)—it just—it felt good. And then I looked forward to how God was going to help me not only replace what I just gave, but would give me more so that I could do more. Over the years God has just done that. (I mean) I have never not given; I've always given. Now, I've also learned since then: write your name on the envelope—that helps a lot.

[Scott:] For—what?—tax purposes?

[Sal:] Tax purposes and (you know) just to prove to the church you are actually giving. [Saying:] Here you go (you know); I really am [giving]. So, we've always believed that we couldn't out-give God. Even when we lost money on houses and the economy turns bad, we've always been on God's economy. God has always—over time and through faith—met every one of our needs and beyond. I can tell you, I would have never thought in all of my wildest dreams that I would be as blessed as I am today. So I'm not going to stop. (You know) it doesn't matter, whatever happens, I'm going to give at no-matter-what-income-level I happen to be in. Because I know God's able to take care of us. So at this stage in life, I'm not stopping now. So it's just a tremendous feeling of joy and anticipation.

[Scott:] That's good. Well, thank you.

[Sal:] You're welcome, man. [Addressing the congregation:] Thank you, guys.

[Scott:] Thanks, Pastor Sal.

Lead Pastor: Dr. Sal Sberna

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**This Good News tells us how God makes us  
right in his sight. This is accomplished  
from start to finish by faith.  
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that a righteous person has life."**

*Romans 1:17*  
(*New Living Translation*)

**Legend:**

**(words in parentheses)** = spoken by the preacher *but unnecessary* to the core sentence idea

**[words in square brackets]** = additional explanation for clarity *not spoken* by the preacher

**{words in curly brackets within indented quote}** = spoken explanation *not part of the quote*