

A Christian View of Giving & Tithing

2 Corinthians 9

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 19, 2021

Good morning, everyone. I have an exciting announcement to mention to you. As Quentin already said, we are changing locations next week. I don't know if that's an exciting announcement or not, I guess it's a little bit of sadness that comes with that, but we are going back inside. Our elders and deacons have met several times to talk about it and decided that we do love meeting in the tent, it's really been encouraging, but the weather's changing soon, so we need to go ahead and make that switch. We talked about the idea of closing the walls of the tent, and putting in heaters because we have the electricity for that. but the problem is, it doesn't change the temperature outside. And a lot of our fellowship actually comes out there, and so we decided to do this.

For those of you who are new to British Columbia, let me just tell you that the weather is pretty simple this time of year, because it's rain, followed by more rain, followed by rain with a tint of snow. And so you don't want to be outside when that happens. I remember the first time we visited BC, it was around this time of year, and my wife and I said, "Wow, it rains so much here; they don't even use umbrellas." So that's the weather this time of year. Also to add to that, we're going to be going back to one service as well, so you want to keep that in mind too; but be our service will be at 9:30. And the facility does have room for 180 people in there, so it should be big enough to hold everybody. But if we find that it's too cramped, we'll go back to two services, but we'll keep you informed on that. But all that to say, please mark your calendars for that because if you show up here, you're going to be milking a cow.

With that said this morning, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of 2 Corinthians because that's the book we're in today. So if you would, please turn in your Bibles to the book of 2 Corinthians. And as you're doing that, if you are new to us, we're in the middle of a series on the book of Ecclesiastes that we started a few weeks ago as a church, and it's been a real blessing for us as a church, but before we go back to that, I want to take you somewhere else today and talk to you about an important issue that's going on in the life of our church. And that is our need to find a building. We need to find a permanent place to meet so we don't have to keep going back and forth like this and wearing ourselves out. And to talk about that I just want to read 2 Corinthians chapter nine to you. If you look in the first verse, says this, it says,

For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I've sent the brethren, in order that are boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that as I was saying, you may be prepared; [to give to the Macedonians. And if you look down in verse six, he says]

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have in abundance for every good deed.

We'll stop the reading there, but a major theme of that passage as you can see, is the subject of giving. Because in the middle of it, he says he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. That means he who gives sparingly will also reap sparingly. If you give a little to God, you get a little back in return. Paul's not teaching a health and wealth theology here where you give to the Lord, and God makes you rich for it. That's not the idea. He's just saying that when you give the right way with the right attitude, the Lord will bless it. So you need to give a lot; you need to give with that in mind. He also says God loves a cheerful giver, which means God doesn't want a sour puss. He doesn't want you to be grouchy when you tithe; He wants you to be joyful. And verse seven says each one must do just as he's purposed in his heart, which means you need to be purposeful in this. You need to be smart about your money and what you give to the Lord, but the point is that this needs to be a regular thing in your life. You need to be doing this on a consistent basis.

They've done some studies on this, and according to a recent survey, 91% of Christians say they've given money to the church, and 75% say they've given to missions, which means Christians are generous, despite what you may hear. They're not stingy with their money, but they're sporadic about it. They give a little this week and don't think about it until a year later. Or they put a little in this Sunday in the offering plate, but they don't do it again. Paul says you're supposed to do more because God wants more. In fact, since we haven't talked about this subject much as a church, it would be helpful to say a few words about it because it's a controversial one. Anytime you talk about money, there's lots of concerns that come up. I've seen cartoon cuttings of pastors saying today's sermon is on tithing, and they're in like a suit of armor, you know, like with a sword in their hand, ready to fight. That's not the intention of this. But we do want to say a little bit about it.

When you open up your Bibles, you see that there were two types of giving that's mentioned in here for the church. One was related to God and one was related to the government. If you remember, Jesus said it this way, He said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God, what is God's." And that's interesting, because he's saying that Caesar is not God, there's a difference; and the money goes to both categories. But it's very different for the church, because the Bible tells you to pay taxes to the government, it tells you how much you owe to them, but it doesn't do that for the body of Christ. It leaves it open ended because it doesn't give you a percentage. The principle here is that each one must do as he's purposed in his heart, but it doesn't go further than that.

And to be fair, it tells you more about this in the Old Testament because there, you get a percentage. Because Israel was a theocracy, it was a kingdom of God on earth, and as such, they required a certain

budget to function. Because they had to pay for a king and a court and an army. They had to take care of a temple, and a tabernacle, and a priesthood, and all the sacrifices that went with that. So there's a lot of expenses to run the nation of Israel, so they had a Levitical tax to pay for that. And they had an annual tithe that came to about twenty percent of their income. So when you put it all together, the Jews didn't give ten percent they gave more like twenty. The word tithe that comes from an old word that means ten percent. But it's not actually an accurate term for the Jews; they gave a lot more, but it's different for the church, because we're not a nation anymore. We don't have a theocracy, so the command is not the same. It's different.

To put that in perspective, the New Testament does say a lot about giving. So for example, in Matthew 6:2, Jesus said when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet like the hypocrites do. And that implies that you're supposed to give to the poor. It's just assumed there. In Israel, in the courts of the temple and the steps, the poor people would gather, so you couldn't even go into the house of worship without bumping into them. It's a little different for us; we have to go looking for the poor sometimes, but they're there and we need to give to them. Matthew 6:19 says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven." And that can refer to a lot of things, but in the context it refers to money. You store up treasures in heaven by giving your money away on earth, because you can't take it with you. You don't see a U-Haul following a hearse, so you need to give it away. Luke 6:38, says "Give and it will be given to you." Romans 12:13 says, "Contribute to the needs of the saints." First Corinthians 16:2 says, "On the first day of the week, each one of you is to put something aside in order to give it to the church." That's very specific. But Paul says that there's a reason Christians give their money on Sunday, because we're told to do that in Scripture.

Even then, there's freedom in that, because it doesn't tell you how much to give. Because we're all at different places when it comes to money. Some people make less than others, and for them giving 20% is too much. That would ruin them. And for others, it's just the opposite because 20% is not enough. They make so much that they should give 30% or half their salary away. But it's a matter of the conscience. It all goes back to the heart. To say it another way, this is not something for the elders to dictate to you. It's not something for us to go around with a clipboard and say, "Mr. Jones, I see you haven't given your 20% this week, shame on you. We're gonna put you under church discipline. "Or it's not something for us to say, "Mrs. Davis, I see you didn't put anything in the offering this week. We're going to pass it back." You smile but I've heard of churches doing that. I've heard of churches in the South passing it back two or three times until they gave enough. But that's not the way it works. This is something for people to decide for themselves.

Listen, the church is a spiritual kingdom; it's not a physical one. It focuses on things of the soul, not things of money. But with that said, money is still a factor in the life of the church because we do have physical needs and one need that we have is a building. We need a place to meet because it is going to get uncomfortable out here soon. And the place that we're going to next, it's a nice facility, but we don't

own it; so we can't make changes to it. There's things that we'd like to move around and do this or that with, but it's not ours; so we need something that's ours. You know, I don't have to tell you this. But buildings don't fall from the sky. They don't grow on trees; you have to plan for them. And that's what we're going to be talking about this morning. As we're going to see, this is a very simple passage that Paul writes here because he's asking the Corinthians to meet a physical need. We don't know what it is, but obviously it was physical because he asked them for money. If it was spiritual, he would have said, "Just pray for them." But he does something else. And he tells them that God wants to do this, to bless them, and get them involved in the ministry. If He wanted to, God could have snapped His fingers and taken care of this, but He wanted to get the Corinthians involved, so they could be part of the work. And it's the same way with us today.

I've been told money is the most versatile thing in the world because you can use it to buy drugs, you can use it to buy alcohol or something bad, or you can use it for the Lord. But it all depends on your heart. It all depends on what's going on inside of you, and that's what we're going to talk about today. So if you're taking notes, this morning, in 2 Corinthians 9, we're going to look at four principles of giving in this passage. That's our outline for today. It's what we're talking about in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8, we're going to look at four principles of giving. And at the end of this, we're going to tie it into our building fund that we're starting out. And let's face it, buildings are not easy to find here in Chilliwack. They are expensive. We did look several years ago into buying something but when COVID hit, it kind of changed the name of the game there, but the prices are staggering. They are through the roof. But that's not a problem for God, is it? Our Lord owns the cattle on a thousand hills, so what's a few million dollars to Him? And so we're going to be talking about that. Let's do that with four principles for giving in this passage.

The first one is to give generously. The first principle for giving in this passage is that you need to give generously, which means you should do it lavishly. Go over the top for the Lord. And I'm not going to read all this passage again for the sake of time, but apparently there was a need going on in the churches near Corinth and they were in trouble. And so Paul tells them about it. Just to give you the background, Corinth was located on the southernmost part of the island of Greece in the province, Roman province of Achaia, you actually see the word Achaia in this passage. And it was near a place called Macedonia where Alexander the Great was from, who conquered the world. It was a long way from Paul because it was located 3000 kilometers from Israel, and so Paul calls on the Corinthians to help them. He couldn't help them; he couldn't be involved, so he asked them to do it. It's safe to assume as the Macedonians came to faith in Christ, their family disowned them, because that's usually what happened. As the grandchildren and great grandchildren and great grandchildren of Alexander the Great got saved and abandoned the old gods and put away all the old pagan notions, they cut them off, leaving them destitute. And so Paul says, "You guys need to do something about it. You're the closest ones, you're the closest church, so step up." And in order to help them he gives him some principles on giving.

And the first one is that he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. That means he who gives a little will get a little bit back in return. In order to explain that, you know, I've told you before farming was a big part of life in the ancient world. So statements like this were pretty common. But this one basically means you get out of things what you put into them. You receive back what you put into the ground. Sow a little and you get a little. The ancient people did not have modern machines like we do today, so they didn't have tractors. So in order to sow a seed, they would take a slave, drape a sack across his shoulders, and have him walk through a field and throw it like this. He would just toss it. And as he did that, the emphasis was not on accuracy; it was on quantity. Because he wasn't trying to put it in nice, neat rows like we have in our farms. He just wanted to get as much out of it as he could. Our farms look very pretty when you drive by them in Chilliwack; they're all nice and neat and arranged. It wasn't like that in Israel, but this is the principle behind this expression: God's not asking you to put your money in a nice, neat package. He just wants you to give as much as you can.

In fact, the word "spare" here is the Greek word *phaidomenos*, which means cheaply. And you could say it this way, "He who sows cheaply will reap cheaply." In other words, if you're stingy with God, He'll be stingy with you. If you hold back on Him, He'll hold back on you, so don't do that. You need to give bountifully instead, and that's the word that means blessing. Paul says if you sow bountifully, God will bless you for it. He'll open the floodgates of heaven. But the point is that you need to be generous in your tithes to the Lord. You don't want to be stingy. Now again, that can mean different things to different people. So that generous to this person may look different than generous to that person. Five dollars to a poor man means a lot more than it does to someone who's rich, but the basic idea is that you need to throw it out. Don't keep it to yourself.

This is important because from what we could tell, Corinth was a wealthy town. I mean, it had a lot of money in it because it was located right along the trade route between northern and southern Greece, it was right in the center of the island. And it was located next to the ocean, so the seafaring traffic went through there. It also hosted an event every year known as the Isthmian games, which is like our modern-day Olympics. Every time the Olympics rolls through Vancouver, or somewhere like that, the city on earns a ton of money. Corinth did that. And with all that financial success, Paul says this is what you need to do with it, you need to give it away. You need to use it for the Lord. Don't spend it on yourself to buy a new RV, give it to Him.

I think he would say the same thing to us today. If Paul was writing this to us, he would give us a similar statement because we live in a place much like Corinth. There's a lot of money in Chilliwack now, isn't there? I looked it up this week, and from what I could tell, the population of Chilliwack has grown by about 40,000 people over the past couple of decades, which means it's doubled in size. In the 1990s Chilliwack was around 60,000; now it's hovering around 100,000. And with the growth has come a growth in the economy. Because people used to drive beat up trucks around town; now they drive jaguars. Some of you don't know what that is, so you can ask the person sitting next to you. Maybe they can tell you what a Jaguar is. They live in houses that are the same way as well. Some of the houses are

worth a fortune here. And it makes you wonder what are we supposed to do with all this newfound wealth? Well, the answer is the same. You need to give it away. Just like the Corinthians, you shouldn't keep it to yourself, because God gave it to you in the first place. It was His to start with, and so you need to acknowledge that by giving it to Him in return. I mean, I don't know if you've thought about this, but you could have been born in a poor town. And God in His sovereignty and His providence could have placed you and could have set you in a place that didn't have any money at all. But He didn't. He put you here. And you have to be humble about that.

The first church I pastored was in a poor town. I remember the place was flat broke, people were out of work, the economy was busted. I would look out the front of our porch, and I could see five abandoned buildings from our front porch. In the back, you could see five abandoned cars, the whole town was like that. And after living here and there, I would say that spiritually speaking, we're no better off than they were. People are no holier; we just have a little more money. That's all. And we can't be proud about that.

To say it another way, another lesson you see in this text is that you should give because God will reward you for it. And that sounds strange but what that means is no man ever farmed just to farm; you're doing it to get something back. And it's the same idea. The only difference is that the reward here is spiritual, not physical. Paul's not saying God will make you rich in money when you give, but He will make you rich in other things that are more important. But the idea is that giving is worth it. If you think about it, Paul could have just said here, "You should give because I told you to." He could have just said, "You should do this because it's the right thing to do. It says it in the Bible." But he said so much more than that. He wanted to give you some motivation and the motivation is that you reap what you sow.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, once said that when a man becomes a Christian, God does a miraculous work in his life so that he changes. And he goes from being lazy, slothful, and indolent to becoming industrious, trustworthy, and prosperous. And when that happens, if that man does not become generous with his money, he is a miserable wretch. And he's right. I mean, some of you have seen this when you got saved, your life turned around so much that your job turned around and you started making more money. And what John Wesley is saying is we just have to give it back out of gratitude. And many of us have heard the story of the Alamo in Texas's fight for independence back in the 1800s. But what you may not know is that the general who led that war was a man named Sam Houston. The city of Houston, Texas was named after him. He was a hard drinking, hard fighting soldier who lived a terrible life until he got saved. And when he did, his first act of business was to give his money away. He offered to pay half his pastor salary because he said that when God saved me, he saved my pocketbook too. And friends, I have to ask you this morning, has God ever saved your pocketbook? Has He ever baptized your wallet? Because if He has, then this is what it will look like, you'll be generous with it.

That brings us to another thing to talk about today. And that is that you need to give sincerely and cheerfully. The first principle for giving in this passage is that you need to give generously. But the second one is that you need to give sincerely and cheerfully, which means that you need to give with a happy heart as well. You need to do it because you're excited about it. It thrills your soul. And Paul is getting a little more personal here with this one. But if you read on in verse six, he says,

Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he's purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

As you read on here, you can tell that Paul is covering this subject from as many angles as he could think of, because after the talking about the need to be generous, he says each one must do as he's purposed in his heart. That means that this is where your giving comes from. It comes from the heart. It has to be sincere otherwise God doesn't want it. There's nothing that God hates more than hypocrisy and worship, He can't stand deception. And since giving is part of worship, it's got to be genuine, or you need to keep it to yourself. This also means that you need to think about it when you give to the Lord, because he mentions the word purpose in here, and that implies thought behind it. You need to give with consideration; it doesn't need to be impulsive, spur of the moment.

I've talked to Christians who have come into money all of a sudden, and they said, "I know what I'll do with it. I'm going to give it all away to the orphans in China."

And I've asked them, "Well, do you know any orphans in China?"

And they say, "no."

I say, "Okay, well, do you know any missionaries there?"

"No."

"Do you know any trustworthy people who will use the money in a God honouring way?"

"No."

"Then don't give the money because you don't know that it's going to get to the orphans in China."

Your giving needs to have purpose. It needs to be generous, but it doesn't need to be stupid. God's not honoured by that. I mean, the Corinthians gave this money to Paul because they knew Paul. They trusted him, they knew his character, they knew how he was going to spend it, they didn't give it to a stranger. And neither should you as well. I told the folks in the first hour that most of the charitable organizations in North America, or the nonprofit ones, don't have to record their taxes in the same way. And so what's been found out over the years is that a lot of them have spent the money foolishly. They've given hundreds of thousands of dollars to CEOs and they've spent it on expensive trips and vacations, and the donors had no idea. You don't want to do that.

On the flip side, Paul goes on to say that you need to be cheerful when you give as well. He says each one must do just as he's purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion for God loves a cheerful giver. This is the first time Paul mentions God in the passage. And the significance is that he has told you a human reason why you need to give. He's talked about this from an earthly level, but now he's doing it from a heavenly one. And he says this is what God thinks about when you tithe. He loves a cheerful giver. Men love it when you give \$100 or \$200 or a million dollars. Men love it when you give riches and treasures and gold and that sort of thing. God wants you to be cheerful. That's what He cares about. This is why poor people can do this and rich people can do this.

And the word "cheerful" here it's a Greek word *hilaros* from which we get the word hilarious because it means something that makes you laugh. Paul says your giving needs to do that for you. It shouldn't be grudging or under compulsion, but it should make you so happy that it makes you laugh, brings a smile to your face. I think we all know the difference between those two things, because we've all seen people give money to the cashier at Save on Foods because they ask him, you know, "Would you like to give something to charity," and they say, "Okay." They're not doing that because they liked that charity; they want them off their back. And Paul says you don't need to give to God, so He'll get off your back. It needs to be about so much more than that. There needs to be passion involved; there needs to be emotion.

And this is interesting, because it's something that's mentioned a lot in Scripture. But way back in 1 Samuel 15, the prophet Samuel told Saul, he said, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" Samuel said that at the beginning of Israel's monarchy to set the tone for it. And he says, even if you're king, God doesn't care how many offerings you bring; He wants your obedience. He wants you to know that you're not the real king, He is. You need to act like it.

Micah 6 says this another way, we read this earlier, but it says,

Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil?... He told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Now Micah says God doesn't delight in thousands of offerings, rivers of oil, He just wants you to be humble. He just wants you to be sincere.

In Matthew 23, Jesus said this to the Pharisees, one more verse here, but He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you tithe mint and dill and cumin." Those are spices. In other words, the Pharisee would go through his cupboard, pull out the pepper, and tithe ten or twenty percent of that in the offering plate. Jesus says that's no good because you "neglected the weightier provisions of the law." When you clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside, they're full of robbery and dead men's bones.

But I think you guys get the point. You need to pay attention to your heart when you give. You need to make sure that your soul is in the right place before the Lord.

You know, I'll never forget the time someone paid my tuition in seminary, because they sent me a letter in the mail that said this, I still have it with me, it's 20 years old, but I kept it all these years. Because it said this, he said,

“Dear Jeremy, Matthew 6:33, says, ‘But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.’ I know it's expensive to live in California, so God has arranged through servants of His to have \$3,000 put into your bank account in First Citizens Bank.” This is 20 years ago. So that's like, what \$5,000 now? 6000? To me, it was like a million dollars. “It's already been deposited in the account you've closed. I hope this helps to ease the burden of your tuition and allows you to continue to glorify God. May the Lord bless you in all you do.”

And as I read that, you can still see it, I've got the envelope here, I saw it was unsigned, it had no return address. But I called my dad right away. I said, “Hey, Is this legit?” I mean, it would be a terrible prank if somebody did that. And he said, “Yeah,” he said, “actually, they deposited several months ago; we don't know who it is. You can't even track it anymore.” But they did that just for the joy of giving. They didn't want any credit for it. I couldn't give him any credit for it; I don't know who it was. It came from the bottom of their heart. That's what Paul's talking about here. Your giving needs to be like that.

Which brings us to one more thing to talk about. One more principle for giving in the passage. Just to review these other ones. The first one is you need to give generously. Secondly, you need to give sincerely and cheerfully, which means with proper heart. So many people don't want to talk about that subject when the issue of money comes up. They don't want to talk about the heart because they say, “As long as I give something who cares?” Well, God does. He wants your entire soul involved in this. And that brings us to one more point and that is that your giving needs to be hopeful. The fourth principle for giving in this passage is that giving needs to be hopeful, which means it needs to be optimistic as you look forward to what God will do. And if you look in verse seven again, it says this,

Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.

Again, if you remember, Paul has given the Corinthians some motivation here. And he says, here's some motivation now, you should give because God will make all grace abound to you. That doesn't refer to saving grace as much as it refers to natural grace, or the grace that meets your needs. Because Paul says that this is what God will do when you give to Him: He will make sure that all your needs are met. That's always the concern when you talk about tithing because some people think God will let them

run out of money when they do that, but Paul says He won't. You may run out of money because of sin, and you may run out of it because of foolishness, you didn't spend it the right way. But you won't run out of it if you're giving it to the Lord.

Just to highlight this, you can see the word "all" or "sufficient," or its equivalent mentioned eight times in here. In fact, it's mentioned so much that this sentence is kind of hard to read. But Paul says, first he says, "God is able," which means He has the power to take care of you. He has the ability to do it. And it says "He's able to make" which means He has the creativity as well. Where you can't find a way, God can. You put your money in the offering plate, I have no idea how God is going to use this, well He can and He will. And "God is able to make all grace," not some grace, but all grace. Not a little bit, but a lot abound, which gives the idea of exceeding all expectations. "Always," which is a reference to time. "In everything," which is a reference to circumstance. "Having all sufficiency," which is a reference to scope, because no matter how bad the trial is, God is sufficient. But the point is that He will take care of you, so you have nothing to worry about when you give to Him. Earlier, Paul says that you should give because God will reward you for it; but now he looks at it from another angle. And he says you should give because God will provide for you. Remember, Israel was supposed to bring the first fruits of their offering. Why the first fruit? To show that they had the faith that God would provide for all the rest. They didn't give after they saw their crop was going to be okay. They didn't give six months later after they saw the all the finances were in place. No, they had to give right away. That's the idea here.

You know, according to some of the latest polls, Canada is very popular place to live. People enjoy being here, but it's so expensive, in British Columbia anyway. Nothing is cheap here. You guys have heard the expression that B.C. stands for bring cash. Or be concerned because you're going to run out of it. And it's true. But Paul says even then, you have to know that God understands that. He knows how expensive things are here, and He'll take care of you because His grace is enough. The famous missionary Hudson Taylor once said that God's work done in God's way will never lack God's help. And he's right.

And let me tell you why this is so important. At the end of the day, if you look down in verse 15, this is how Paul closes the passage out. When he says this, he says, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift." You could translate that thanks to God for Jesus, or thanks be for the gift of Him. Because listen friends, you need to give this way because God gave something to you. You need to do this because He presented Jesus to you as a gift that you did not deserve. You didn't earn it. You were lost when He saved you. You were headed for hell, but He did it anyway because He loved you. And now you need to do the same thing in return. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love, because He first loved us." And we could say that we give for the same reason because He first gave. God started and we're just responding. It was His idea in the first place; we're just reacting.

Let me stop here for a moment and tie this into our situation because we talked about what this means for the Corinthians and what this means in the first century. But let's make it personal and talk about our

time and age. How do we apply this to our lives? Well, like I said earlier, we need a place to meet, just to put it bluntly. We need a building that we can call our own to worship in. Because it's been great doing this; this has really blessed our church meeting on the farm. But we're going to burn ourselves out like this. We're gonna be like the children of Israel wandering for 40 years in the wilderness until they stoned Moses or tried to, and I don't want to see that happen here. I don't want you guys to stone me. So we got to find some way to figure this out.

We also need a visible presence in the community as well. That's another issue. We need something that's more accessible throughout the week because currently we do a lot of stuff over the internet. We have two assistants working part time to help us with that, and they do a great job but there's only so much you can do that way. We spend hours each week as an office texting, emailing, calling, and we still can't get a hold of everybody. We think a building would help with that if we had an office throughout the week.

We also need an easier place to find as well, so people don't miss us. Because we've had guests come out here on a Sunday and almost drive past the farm because they couldn't see it from the road. We've also had some other ones show up at the SDA building because they thought we were there. And they just missed the service for that reason.

And I've got some other ones I could mention as well; there's quite a list. But all this is to say that we would like to start a building fund this morning to help solve this problem. We'd like to ask you as a church to consider giving to a special collection to help us find a place to meet. In just a moment, one of our elders, Quentin Smith, is going to come up and talk to you about that. He's going to tell you how to give as well as fill you in on what we've done to set this up. So we've done quite a bit of legwork to get this started; but we're presenting it to you this morning because we'd like to kick it off today and ask for your help. I feel very comfortable talking to you about this because you've always been a very generous congregation. I've talked to pastors that tell me when money comes up, it's a sore subject because the people don't give a lot. That's not us. You guys have always been kind in this. I'm just asking you to keep it up this morning and point your generosity in a specific direction. I remember the time that I told you we were \$25,000 behind our budget back in 2019, and as soon as I told you that you guys made up the difference in a matter of weeks, you guys remember that? It was just like that. I also remember the time that we said we needed a tent this past spring and someone donated \$5,000 instantly, they didn't hesitate because that's the kind of church you are. So as elders, we're just asking you to stay the course, because we can't do it all ourselves.

And let me also say that we haven't brought this up before because we don't want to get caught up in money as a church. We don't want to get too hung up on physical things. In fact, I've almost been here five years, and I can say this is the first time we've ever talked about this. But the fact of the matter is we live in a world where money is an issue, and you can use it for good or evil. We just want to help you use it for something good.

Just one final thought. But it's been said that a family doesn't need a home to be a family. It can be one without it, but it helps. And it's the same way with churches. You can be a church without a building, but it helps it makes ministry more enjoyable. And that's what we're looking to do here.

In my studies this week, I came across a story of a man named Russell Herman who died and left a staggering \$2 billion to the city of St. Louis. Then he left another \$6 trillion to the United States government to help them pay off their debt. But the funny thing is that he didn't have it. When he died, all Rossel Herman owned was a beat-up old Cadillac. But friends, isn't it good to know that God not asking you to do that? I mean, He's not asking you to give something you don't already have. He just wants you to give of your abundance, so will you do that today? Let me pray that you would and ask for God's help in these things.

Heavenly Father, we do pray for Your mercies as we consider starting a building fund for our church. And even more than that, Lord, this morning, our heart's desire is to know the principle behind all of that, and that is that we can be lavish and generous and extravagant in our giving because our God is that way. You gave Your Son for us, and nothing shy of that. Lord, so many times we forget our salvation. We forget how our whole eternal life started, but it started with a gift. And so we need to give gifts to others. Help us in these things, Father.

I do pray for those in our congregation, Lord. Some are doing very well financially, some are not. And we just all need wisdom to consider these things in grace with one another. We do pray also, as we begin this search, that you would help us in this. Property is expensive in our town, and it's not an easy thing to find a good fit. So we just throw that before You. We know that You do own the cattle on a thousand hills, and you are a God who has all the riches in heaven. So we just pray for your mercy in this and help us as we talk about the practical things here in this next part of our service. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.