

Introduction

Good morning. It's great to see you today. If you have your Bible with you, and I hope that you do, I want to invite you at this time to go ahead and take that out. Open it up with me to the Book of Acts. We are going to be in chapter 20, starting in verse 35. If you don't have a Bible with you, don't worry. It's going to be alright. All you have to do is just use the Bible that's there in the seat tray in front of you. If you're not comfortable using that, for whatever reason, don't worry; just follow along. If you want to use your Bible app that's on your phone or on your tablet, feel free to use that as well. We are continuing on in our series that's entitled "Broke." We're talking our broken attitude toward money and finances and material possessions. It's been a lot of fun. Last week we kicked it off by looking at Genesis 12:2; we were talking about the fact that we've been blessed to be a blessing. God gave that word to Abram whenever He called him, so we're continuing on, understanding that here today.

This week I had the opportunity to go on a prayer retreat, so I spent 24 hours out at Trinity, Texas... if you know where Trinity, Texas, is... it's a town in the woods. As part of that, I was part of a prayer exercise where we were completely silent. One of the things that happened was that they directed us to listen for the lies that the enemy whispers to us. You may or may not know this but Satan desperately wants to lie to you... in fact, consistently is lying to you... telling you things that are not true about who you are and things that are not true about what God believes about you, about your future, and about the shame that you may or may not feel about the past that you have in your life. The enemy is consistently coming at us with lies. Then the Lord gives us this truth, and the truth comes from the Holy Spirit, but the primary source of God's truth for us today in this world is this Book. And we need to know this Book, because this Book contains the very words of God. We call it the Word of God for a specific reason... it is Truth. If we understand this Book, if we study this Book, then we can understand the truth that God wants to give us, to implant in our hearts and in our minds, to combat the lies that may come against us. The truth that we need to hear today is that the fount from which our attitude toward possessions, money, and all of that stuff flows from is the fount that is testified to in the pages of Scripture, and that is the fount of what we call the Gospel. Over and over, we use that word the "Gospel" here. What does that mean? It means that God gave us Good News: He rescued us, He came after us, and He saved us. That is the fount from which our position regarding possessions ought to begin. It is the headwaters of our river. We cannot understand how we should relate to possessions until we first take into account the truth of the Scripture that we find here... the truth of the Gospel.

So what is the truth of the Gospel? We see throughout redemptive history... throughout the pages of this Book... that there are two themes that are consistently warring with one another. And these are those two themes: Number one: Our God is completely holy, completely just, and must punish sin. In fact, no sin can be allowed into His presence. That is theme number one. Theme number two: Our God is loving and redemptive and wants to save us. That is the other theme that runs throughout the pages of Scripture. These two themes are reconciled only through the gift of Jesus Christ. God's holiness and justice will always butt up against God's mercy and love unless you can find a way to bring them together. God has done that, and the way that He has done that is in the Person of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, what happened was this: It was that God's desire for sin to be punished was met, and God's desire to redeem and love us was met. Whenever the tomb is empty three days later and Jesus rises from the dead, God's desire to spend eternity with us is given fruition, and those who place their faith... that this was an actual historic event that Jesus Christ was a Man, God in the flesh, died for us and raised from the dead... those who place their faith in that truth now have a complete new way to view the world and the lens by which they see reality. This is the Gospel. And we need that because we cannot understand how

to approach the world apart from that. So what we said last week, in Genesis 12:2, *"You have been blessed so that you will be a blessing..."* The *"You have been blessed"* portion of that verse is a direct reference to the fact that God ought to have destroyed you but nevertheless saved you. So what we read in Isaiah 53:10 is that *"it pleased the Lord to crush Him..."* It doesn't make God happy, per se, that His Son must die, but it pleases God that the aspects of His character, His justice and His holiness AND His desire for redemption and love come together in one place... that pleases Him that that was able to happen. You have been blessed because God has been pleased to save you, if you will put your faith in Jesus Christ. Did anyone hear what I just said? (Laughter) You can talk... You are allowed to respond. So, you have been rescued by this God.

Now, if this is true, it affects every area of your life. So no one has any problem whenever we say, "We have to love our neighbor because we first were loved." No one has any problem when we say, "The way that we handle ourselves sexually is to be a model of the representation between Jesus Christ and His Church"... no one has a problem with that. But for some reason, we have a massive sticking point when it comes to the fact that it also ought to reflect within our finances. We have been given freedom, redemption, in headwaters of who God is and has been brought to us through Jesus Christ; this therefore means that Jesus is Lord over our dollars as well. He is Lord over everything, including your pocketbook.

Maybe you heard the story that Sam Houston, who was a little bit of a wild man... once he came to faith, suddenly he became one of the most generous benefactors and philanthropists in the State, giving to all sorts of Christian ministries. And when asked why he suddenly became so generous, Sam Houston replied and he said, "When I was baptized, I didn't hold my wallet out of the water..." (Laughter) The truth is that every aspect of who we are has been affected by the Gospel, including our finances. Consequently, we must see what the pages of Scripture have to say to that. So, Acts 20:35... I'm going to just give you one verse. This is the Apostle Paul, by the way, that *"...by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"* If last week's sermon, was entitled "#Blessed," this week's sermon is entitled "#MoreBlessed" because it is "more blessed" to give than to receive. When Jesus Christ saved you, He demonstrated to you His desire to give everything for you and then wants you also to give as well.

1. Money Can Buy Happiness.

You see, the great truth that we're actually going to talk about today is that money truly can buy happiness. Now, you've heard that money can't buy happiness, but it's actually false. It has been scientifically proven that money can buy happiness. Did you know that?



Elizabeth Dunn is a professor at the University of British Columbia and has done multiple studies regarding how you can actually buy happiness. She has studied consistently, over and over and over, the way that people interact with their money. And the way that they interact with their money is the way that consistently people are found to have returning levels of increased happiness if they do certain things. You may be surprised to hear her first find, which is this: Individuals who have more tend to enjoy the simple pleasures of life less. She did this experiment where she gave people chocolate. People who made more money enjoyed the chocolate less than people who made less money. Weird, right? But there was one antidote to that attitude. Did you know that? Do you know what the antidote was? Generosity. People who consistently gave, even if they made more money, they still enjoyed the chocolate. Some of the ladies in here are saying, "Alright, I'm ready; let's do this. Let's give." (Laughter) "I've got to enjoy my chocolate." Right? But I want you to hear this... that for whatever reason, God has wired us in such a way that we actually get more happiness when we are generous. She did another experiment in which she found that people who spent their bonus checks on themselves reported lower levels of happiness than people who took their bonus checks and spent it on others. She did another experiment where she gave people money and said, "Spend this by this afternoon and come back and tell me how you spent it." The people who spent it on themselves reported lower levels of happiness. The people who spent it on others reported higher levels of happiness. For whatever reason, whether it's goals or bonus checks or free money that we get in our hands, if we choose to use it on other individuals, we, for some reason, report back that we are happier. Why? ...Because God has hard-wired generosity to be a good thing rewarded in the hearts of men.

Dr. Stephen Post did another experiment in which he measured generosity in relation to overall physical health. Are you ready for this? Individuals who are generous live longer and tend to be healthier. This is his direct quote: "Giving protects overall health twice as much as daily aspirin protects for heart disease." "#MoreBlessed" indeed. You are happier when you give... you live longer when you give... you are healthier when you give. Why is it that God puts this in? ...Because the pages of Scripture extoll the virtue of giving and generosity over and over and over.

2 Corinthians chapter 9 [verse 6]... we looked at it last week... *"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."*

Proverbs 3:9... *"Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."*

Malachi 3:10... *"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."*

2. But It Ain't Cheap.

Those are just a few verses talking about generosity. I could spill out dozens of verses for you, but when we get to that last one, there is that pesky word that if you were brought up in church and you have been around church or you've been on the side and you've heard people say the word "tithe." What's "tithe"? "Tithe" means "a tenth"... ten percent. People have, in Christian churches, thoroughly taught that tithing is the minimum standard of giving that is required for believers. But some people wonder, "Is that really the truth? If we're under grace, does God actually want us to give at this sort of level? Shouldn't we give at whatever level we actually want to give?"

This is something I want us to understand. I do believe that money can buy happiness, if we are generous, but I also think the other thing that we see in the pages of Scripture is that "It ain't cheap." Actually, if we are going to experience a level of happiness that most of us want to experience, we actually have to be more generous than we think that we want to be.

I'm going to just start with the idea of tithing for just a second. And I want to just read some verses to you. Now let's go back to Sam Houston who said he didn't hold his pocketbook... his wallet... up out of the water. If God's Word testifies to a manner of giving, I would, therefore, challenge us to say, maybe we ought to understand why God says it, and we also ought to consider if we ought to be obedient unto it.

Genesis 14:20... *"...and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand! And Abram gave him..."* (Melchizedek) *"...a tenth of everything."* This is the first instance of tithing in the Scripture.

The Book of Hebrews tells us that Melchizedek was a "pre-type," a prefiguring, of Christ. In other words, when Abram was tithing, giving ten percent to Melchizedek, he was foreshadowing a manner of giving that would be used throughout the pages of Scripture.

Leviticus 27:30-32... *"Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. If a man wishes to redeem some of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it. And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord."*

Numbers 18:21... *"I give to the Levites all the tithes of Israel as their inheritance, in return for the work that they do while serving in the tent of meeting."*

Those are Old Testament verses saying that God used the tithe, ten percent of all that everyone made, to support the ministry of the temple. Now, in the New Testament, sometimes people will say, "You know, tithing is never mentioned in the New Testament." It's not true; it is mentioned once. It's mentioned by Jesus and it is commended. This is what He says, *"Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees; you hypocrites! (This is Matthew 23:23, by the way.) 'You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cumin.'"* What is he saying? "You are so faithful to the law that you don't only just tithe on your money, you even tithe on the herbs in your garden. *"But, you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former."* So Jesus actually commends tithing; He says it's a good thing. He just says, "But just don't tithe and be a jerk about it." Has anybody ever known someone who tithed but at the same time was as mean as nails. Yeah... lots of people use that tithe as a legalistic rule that they hold over the heads of other individuals. "You're not as generous as I am." Well, if you're holding it over someone's head, you're not generous in the first place.

So the question is this: "Why is it that God uses this ten-percent rule?" Let me give you the short answer: We don't know. But I'll give you the longer answer. These are some things that I think make sense when I read the pages of Scripture, why God might ask us to **begin** by giving ten percent of our income.

1. ...Because it's a proportional amount. If you make a little bit of money, then you are giving far less, ten percent. If you are making boatloads of money, then you're giving a tenth of those boatloads. Right? It's proportional, no matter what. It's the idea of a tax that actually works. No offense, IRS. It's that idea that they say, "It is a ten-percent, flat fee, no matter what it is that you make. And you say, "This is what I make; I am going to take ten

percent of that and give that." So, whether you make a lot or a little, you have a standard by which you can start, and it is proportional to your income. It's not an amount; it's a percentage.

2. It funds the work of ministry. Now, if you notice, in several of these verses, the whole purpose behind the tithe was to further the ministry that was used in the temple itself. In fact, lots of people have questions about, "How did that work with the Levites?" We don't know tons of the details but we do know this: Those dollars were given to fund ministry itself. Sometimes I have overheard people say... nobody has ever said this to me, by the way... probably because they are afraid of what I would say. But I have heard people say this... I've overheard it... They say this: "The Church doesn't need that much money." I have two thoughts whenever I hear that.

A. It's funny that you think you do need that much money.

B. How do you know? This is my point on that. Whenever someone says that the Church doesn't need that much money... what they're really saying is, "We are doing all of the ministry that needs to be done."

I took just a couple of minutes and scratched out very quickly, "What are things that we would do today, if dollars were not an issue?" These are just some of the things that I wrote down.

- We would pay off our debt.
- We would build a children's building that would be the greatest children's building in this part of the city so we could reach as many families as possible.
- We would start a five-day-a-week preschool out of that building so that we could reach even more families.
- We would start neighborhood hubs of ministry that worked in conjunction with businesses so that they might have a place to meet and also with church planting, so that they might have a place to meet, so that we could do incredible ministry, not just on this campus but around our community.
- We would build a brand new counseling center that would provide free counseling, be it premarital, marital, drug addiction... not that those things are related... (Laughter) that kind of counseling... (There you go... you got it.) ...for anyone in the city.
- We would launch a recovery ministry today.
- We would launch a ministry that would help business men and women discover how they could create a business model that would create revenue streams for the Kingdom of God around this city.
- We would double the number of international ministries and missionaries that we support. We support a fair number of those individuals even today. I wish that we could support even more, but our receipts don't allow us to do that.
- We would double the number of people that we are helping in our community who need money for food and clothes and to pay their bills.
- We would open more campuses.

We would do those sorts of things, starting even today. There are more things that I could list off. Those are just a few. Why do I tell you that? Whenever people say, "Why does the Church need that much money?" ...Because there is so much ministry that needs to be done in this city that unfortunately can't happen just

because of dollars. That's the truth. That's not to make anyone feel guilty. That's just to present to you the reality of the situation. Everything that we want to do requires funding, and if we could do it without funding, we would... but we can't.

You see, I think another reason that God tells us that we should tithe a proportional amount, not just also because it's intended for ministry... I also think that God tells us to tithe because it is an amount large enough to scare the socks off you. If you're not tithing, there's a pretty simple reason, most likely why you're not... You don't think you can afford it. You think you can't afford to give that much of your income away. You see, whenever we read in Malachi 3:10, *"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test..."* Whenever we read those sorts of things, what's interesting is that it is coupled with a phrase that God only uses in this verse in the entire Bible... He says, "If you don't believe Me, test Me." God tells us throughout the pages of Scripture, to never test Him, except in one area... our money. Over and over, we read, for instance in Deuteronomy 6:16... *"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah."* But in Malachi 3:10, He says, *"...put me to the test, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."* You are allowed, even commanded, to test God in this particular area. If you are scared to tithe, if you believe the pages of Scripture are true, God says, "Try and I will bless you." You can test Him.

The way that I heard it put forward was a story about a woman who was walking across the desert. As she was walking across the desert, she was dying of thirst. She was at the end of her life, she believed, when she came across a pump. Odd thing to find in a desert... a pump... and she wanted to use that pump so that she might have the opportunity, for whatever reason, to then quench her thirst. But as she pumped up and down on the lever, she found that there was no water coming out of the pump. She was about to give up hope when she noticed at the base of the pump that there was a jar, and that jar was filled with clear water.



As she was ready to take the lid off of the jar and drink it for herself, she noticed a note that was written on the top of the jar. It said this: "Pour the contents of this jar down the pump, and you will find the pump has been primed, and you will have enough water to drink, to bathe, to fill your canteens, and to fill this jar again." Now, clearly she was faced with a choice: Does she take the jar and trust that whoever wrote this was telling the truth and wasn't some sort of psychopath, and pour that down the pump... or does she just take the sure bet and drink it for herself? She decided to pour it down the pump... moved up and down on the lever and suddenly cool, clear water began to flow forth in copious amounts from this pump. But she was forced to give what seemed like everything so that she could receive an abundance that she wondered if even existed in the first place.

This is the promise of Malachi... that when we take a portion of our proceeds... of our income... that we believe is actually too great an amount... When we are faithful and we begin to give in that way, God then allows that amount, for some reason, to prime the pump of His blessing and to bless us in ways that we cannot even begin to fathom. Maybe it will be financial, maybe there will be increased happiness, maybe it will be increased health, but He indicates in Malachi that when we give, He gives even more. And we begin to recognize this great truth: It was never ours in the first place. The reason that the blessings come is because those dollars never belonged to us to begin with.

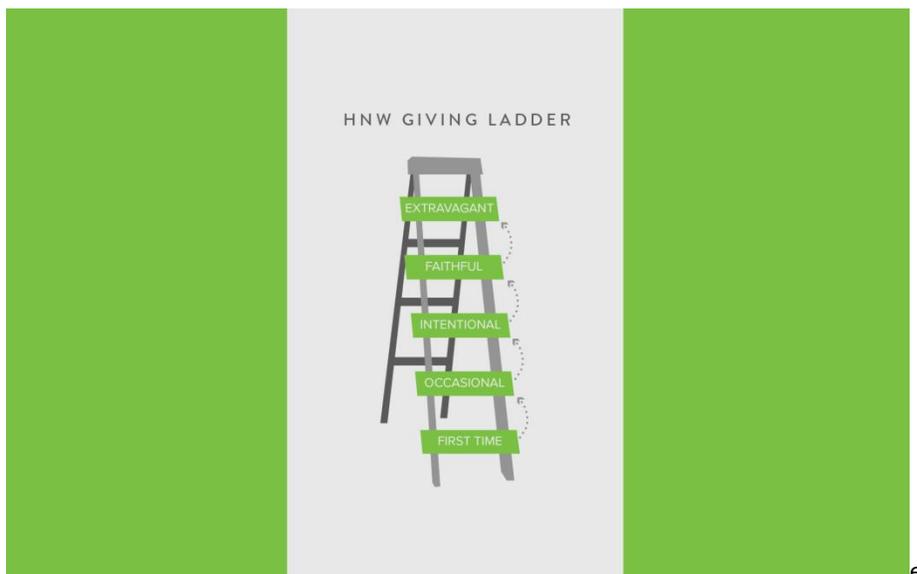
Years ago, we used to dream and pray and say, "Lord, would You one day give us a house large enough that we could host people in our home for ministry?" We certainly used the house that we had and had people over, but we dreamed of having a house where kids could run and play, we would have two stories, and there would be a game room. And we dreamed of having a house where we could host classes over and groups over and teams over and do that. Whenever we would take these to the Lord, He answered that desire of our heart and gave that to us, and we were so grateful. We have been blessed to be able to use that over and over. But what's funny... I'll never forget... we had lived in the house just a couple of weeks, and one night we were sitting there and the kids were already in bed, and Joy said to me... "You know, I used to want a house like this so badly, and now that I have it, I understand this... If God took it away tomorrow, I would be just fine... because it's His."

Everything that we have is His. The problem that many of us continue to run into is that, for whatever reason, we are broken with our attitude toward finances because we believe if it passes through our hands then it must be ours. Now, sometimes when I bring this up, people will say, "Well, Steve... back to the tithing thing... doesn't it say very clearly in the pages of Scripture that we ought to decide the amount that we give?" They will point me to 2 Corinthians 9:7; this is what Paul writes: *"Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* Doesn't it say that we must decide if we want to in our heart? That's a great question and a great verse. The problem with that is, is that we're taking that verse out of context, if you look at it in that way. ...Because that verse is talking about an offering that was given from the Corinthian church that was to be sent on to Jerusalem and then sent on to other churches. In other words, Paul was asking them to not only tithe to support their local church but then to give above and beyond, supporting more ministry. Here's the crazy thing. Some of us right now are nervous and sweating because we're talking about tithing. Some of us need to hear this: Tithing is the base minimum that Scripture talks about because over and over in the pages of Scripture, we actually see Christians giving at a much more radical level. Go and look at the Book of Acts. What are people doing once they hear the Gospel and understand the generosity that God has had toward them in Jesus Christ? They start giving everything. What's happening in this passage in 2 Corinthians... people aren't just tithing. They are saying, "The tithe is the minimum; we've got to give to people in another part of the world so that they can know the Gospel." When we have extra offerings for church planters and for

Lottie Moon so that we can support our IMB missionaries on the other side of the world... that is not part of just our basic ministry supported here that's happening. It's also the idea that we are going to be even more generous.

You see, what I begin to see in the pages of Scripture is this: It's that we tithe first so that we can support the ministry, but we also then give even more. We raise our level of giving because we want to give even more so that even more can know Jesus. Now, I understand... this sounds like a bad financial plan. But for whatever reason, Scripture extolls it... "Be generous"... "Give more"... "Experience My blessing." This, my friends, is the economy of the Kingdom of God. If you want to experience God's Kingdom economy, give at a rate that might make you uncomfortable. In fact, I would say, that if you are not giving at a rate that makes you uncomfortable, you are probably selling yourself a little bit short... because you're not experiencing the blessing that I think that God intends for us.

Now whenever I talk about this, sometimes people will say, "Well, Steve... you don't understand my financial situation." That's true. Everybody is in a different financial place. I want to talk about two practical tools. Everyone pull out the insert that was in your worship guide that you received when you came in this morning. Inside this worship guide, you will see two different things. I want to point out, first and foremost, for individuals who would say, "Steve, my finances are a wreck, I need a financial plan, and I don't know where to start." I want to let you know that starting the Sunday after Easter, we are going to offer a class called "Financial Peace University." It was founded by a man named Dave Ramsey. We have taught this here at Houston Northwest in the past. This class is a class that my wife and I have used the principles in a book that Dave Ramsey wrote entitled "Total Money Makeover." There are biblical principles for financial stewardship, financial management, and financial repair found in this class. It starts the Sunday after Easter. I would encourage you to sign up for that. You see the link right there... HNW.org/fpu... so we would like for you to sign up for that. The cost of the class is \$99. Now, listen to this. Last week, after I announced that the cost of the class was \$99, I had a man in the first service come up to me who said this: "Steve, if there's anyone in our church that wants to take that class that cannot afford the \$99 registration fee, you let me know, and I will pay that fee for them. So if you want to take that class... we believe so strongly that we should understand how it is that God wants us to be financially healthy... that we will allow that class to be free for you.



Secondly, look at the backside of that same insert, and you'll see this green image of a ladder. I've called it the "HNW Giving Ladder." I want to be clear; we didn't invent this. We boldly stole it. (Laughter) But this is, I think, an incredible representation of where most of us are with regard to our giving. You can find yourself on this ladder somewhere. Some of us might be on the first rung, and say "I have not given to HNW church." Others of us might say, "I'm an occasional giver. I give to Houston Northwest but not consistently." Others of us might say, "I'm an intentional giver... I consistently give but I'm not tithing." Others of us might say, "Yes, I'm at that tithing level." Others of us might say, "I give ten percent and beyond." I want to just challenge you to do this: Find yourself on that ladder, and then I would challenge you to do this this week. Pray and ask the Lord to show you where you ought to be on this ladder. Here's the great thing... we've already passed the offering baskets; there is no "gotcha-guilty" offering heading your way. (Laughter) Here's the great news. You see, it's already happened. I believe that God is sovereign, and if you pray and you ask Him, He will tell you where you ought to be on this ladder. The question is, "Do you have the courage to go and ask Him?" The thing is that that's between you and the Lord. You have to decide, "Will I go and will I ask Him where I ought to be on this?" And then, the big thing is once you hear from Him, will you do it? When you go and you look at the pages of this Book, will you see the things that have been given to us and will you act on those?

So here's the great truth that has been presented to us today. It is that our finances were never actually ours to begin with. The breath that's in our lungs, the blood that is coursing through our veins... every single aspect of our being... our atoms are held together by a force that we do not control... this world is spinning at an incredible rate around a star that we did not bring into being. Everything about what we are experiencing in this very moment is something that we were helpless to create yet, nevertheless, here we are. The question is this: If we believe that this was indeed given to us by a sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient Being, and that that Being has sought to reveal Himself in the pages of Scripture and in the Person of Jesus Christ... if those things are true, how ought we to respond to that? How ought we to respond? The way that I believe we ought to respond is through obedience, and I would challenge us to do that today.

So would you do this with me right now? Let's just pray. Let's all bow our heads right now, and let's just give the Lord an opportunity to speak to us today regarding this topic. Now... Nobody is looking around. We all have our heads bowed. I know, everyone looks forward to this sermon... about like they look forward to root canal work. (Laughter) I understand that. Just keep your head down for just a second. I want to ask you this. Would you let God do business with you? I want to ask some questions. Number one, how many of us would say right now, "Hey Steve, at the beginning of this sermon you talked about people hearing lies from the enemy, whispers, false whispers..." I would just ask you, if that is you today and you would say, "I'm struggling; I'm hearing things and nobody is hearing them... I'm worried about that." Whatever that is, that could be about any area of your life. I just want to pray for you. Would you just raise your hand right now? Lots of hands going up. Would you just raise them up... just keep raising them up. Lots of hands. Put them down. If you would say, "Steve, one of the lies that the enemy... that Satan is whispering into my ear and to my mind is that I cannot afford or I am not able to be generous." Regarding your finances, that's the thing that the enemy is whispering into your ear... would you raise your hand? I want to pray for you. Would you raise them up? Lots of hands going up... Just keep raising them up; I want to see them. Okay... thank you. You can put those down. "Lord... lots of lies have been whispered by the enemy. Father, this is the thing I know. You have given us Your Word because it is true, and God when a preacher preaches on a message like giving, tithing... it really puts my neck on the line... Because what's happening is that I am declaring that this will come to pass, that You will bless, that You will meet needs,

that You will do things that we cannot expect... if we will be obedient to the things that You have called us to do. So Father, I pray, first... that You would give courage to those regarding money, to step out. Father, for those who raised their hands on other things, Lord, I pray the same thing, that You would give them courage and God that You would direct them, as a Father, as You are... You are our Father, that You would direct them to pages in the Scripture that would give them the truth that they need. Lord, let them use the tools of the concordance or, if they have to, Google... just get on there and say, 'I struggle with this... Bible verses about this...' Lord, that you would give them Bible verses that they can memorize, that they can write down, that they could use to combat the lies of the enemy... God, give that to them. Let them hear the truth, and God, let them have the courage to act."

Last thing... nobody looking. If you would say today, "Steve, do you know what I need to do? For me today this isn't about money. This is about me coming to faith in Jesus. It's time for me to come to faith in Jesus Christ. It's time for me to decide to surrender, to make Him my Lord, to follow Him with my life." If that's you today, I want to pray for you. Would you raise our hand, and say, "That's me. Today is my day." I see you. Who else? Okay... who else? I see you. Okay I see you... Who else? We have four people. Who else? Raise them up. Okay. I see you. Okay. I want to pray over you right now. "Lord, these individuals who have just raised their hands, they say that it's time for them to follow You... Lord, I pray that they would have the courage now to act on what they just said... Lord, that they would say that today is the day when they move from going to church to following You, by placing their faith in You. They believe in the Crucifixion, they believe in the Resurrection... God, that You would then challenge them to act and to live that out today, that they would put feet to that faith today. God, rescue them and save them. I pray this in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

So several people just raised their hand... Church, how do you feel about several people putting their faith in Him? (Clapping) Awesome... awesome. If you were one of those who raised their hand and said, "I'm ready to place my faith in Jesus," we want to help you to take the first few steps as a believer. There are some things that you can do today. So what we're going to do, here in a moment, we are going to sing. If you raised your hand and you said, "It's time for me to follow Jesus," as we begin to sing, just grab your stuff. If you're with your family, they will wait on you, or they can come with you if they want. If you're with a friend, they'll come with you. Just tell them, "I need to go visit with somebody..." You just go right out these doors and you go to our Connection Center. Our team is there; they want to visit with you. They'll talk to you and they'll tell you exactly what you need to do to take those first spiritual steps of walking with the Lord.

Now, others of us, we may need to just pray with someone today. There are going to be people right here at the front as we sing. So what's going to happen now is we're going to stand and sing, and if it's time for you to go and to follow after Jesus... if today's that day... we want to help you. Just let us help you. Come to the Connection Center. If you need prayer for other things, come to the front. If you are none of those, just sing and worship the God Who loves us this richly that He would bless us like this today. Let's stand together, let's sing, and you respond now as the Lord directs you. You move wherever it is that you need to move.