

**Grace Didn't Die**  
**Grace Giving**  
**Galatians 6:6**

**Introduction:** Before I read you today's verse, I want to make sure you remember what Paul's doing at this point in his letter. He essentially spent the first five chapters laying out the doctrine of grace and slaughtering any justification we could ever have of religious thinking or practice. Paul is now demonstrating how the doctrine of Grace applies to our life, that is, how receiving such an eternally massive gift obligates us to live!

In Galatians 6:1 Paul showed us that the grace we received that rescued us from sin and restored us into relationship with God, requires us to help others experience the same thing. Likewise, in Galatians 6:2 we saw that the grace of God to bear our burdens obligates us to bear one another's burdens. Finally, last week, in Galatians 6:3-5, we found out the grace of God totally removes any justification of pride and arrogance in our life. It literally assaults the inherent narcissism in all of us. Now, given the fact that narcissism leads us to see all that we have through the lens of how it first and foremost benefits ourselves, it should be of no surprise then that the very next verse deals with one of the ways the grace of God should shape how we give! Paul writes,

**"6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches."**

Now, before I get into the specific area of giving Paul is addressing in this verse, I want to make sure you understand a couple things.

First, preachers of God's Word are by no means the only people Christians should support. I'm going to talk more about that at the end of my sermon, but if you are new to the Bible just know that that Bible in no way limits God's expectations of our giving to preachers. We are to be known as those who are so overwhelmed and defined by what we have been given in Christ that we can't help but give to others!

Second, I want to make sure you understand two of the universally ethical expectations about giving found throughout Scripture. By universal I mean they are present in every teaching on giving in the Bible, by ethical I mean it is inherently right, and by expectations, I mean the standard you should apply to how you and everybody else should act.

**Introductory Proposition: There are two universally ethical expectations about giving in the Bible.**

**The first universally ethical expectation is that,**

**(1) It's Biblically ethical to be expected to give to get.**

- A. When you want a cheeseburger from a restaurant, they are not ethically obligated to give it to you unless you pay them money or give them something

else that they agree is worth giving you one of their cheeseburgers. So, whether it's the work you do for somebody that earns payment from them or how you give the money you earned to others to get goods or services back from them, it's always ethical to expect something be given in order to receive something in return. Its why the Apostle Paul wrote this in one of his letters to the church in Thessalonica,

- B. 10 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 11 For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12)**
- C. Paul is commanding them to not give anything but a loving rebuke to those who are physically able to work but refuse to do so! The reason is that it's not ethical to expect to receive something you didn't earn. It is totally unethical to expect people to give you a gift. Now, there is nothing wrong with people giving you gifts (things you didn't earn), nor is it wrong to give things to people they didn't earn, but the point here is that its ethical to not give something to somebody they didn't earn and as such its unethical to expect anybody to give you a gift.
- D. On the other hand, for those who truly cannot earn a basic living, the Bible expects those who have been given the physical capability to provide themselves are also expected to provide for those who can't. This leads me straight to the second Biblically ethical expectation of giving.

**The second universally ethical expectation is that,**

**(2) It's Biblically ethical to be expected to give in proportion to what you've been given.**

- A. The Bible never asks us to give what we don't have. That's not to say its unethical to use your credit card to financially support the church. I use my credit card to give to all kinds of things, but I pay my credit card off generally every week. We treat it like a debit card so we can earn points to help pay for vacation! However, it is totally unethical to give money with your credit card if you aren't capable of immediately paying off your credit card; not to mention foolish!
- B. The Bible only expects us to give from what we have received and that includes both what we have received from our work and what we have received as gifts. However, the Bible is also filled with testimonies of the universal truth that to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48) and as such those who have been given much are expected to give more than those who have a little.

- C. The chief example of this ethic is seen in the righteous expectation of God on those He has given eternal life; the eternal life that required The Father to send His only eternal Son to die for our sins; the eternal life that required The Eternal Son of God to suffer all of the indiscernible fury of the wrath of God on our sin; and most applicably the eternal life that literally includes all that God is and has! This mercy that God has given us cannot be earned or bought, but it absolutely comes with an expectation to give in proportion to what we have received! Paul writes,
- D. **1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1)**
- E. Jesus put it this way,
- F. **37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.  
38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.  
39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:37-39)**
- G. The point is, once you understand what we have received from God, that is the measure of God's grace and mercy towards us, then there is no other reasonable response except to totally surrender ourselves to Him. The life He gives us is eternally glorious in every way, including its length and quality, therefore its totally ethical for God to expect me to surrender myself completely to Him!
- H. This principle holds true in everything. It's not just that we can't give what we don't have, or that its ethical that I would be expected to give based on what I've been given, but more so that we understand everything we have is ultimately a gift from God and therefore the way I give to others should reflect what I've received from Him. It is totally ethical for God to expect His children to be liberal givers because He knows the value of what He has given us far exceeds anything the world has to offer. This expectation is clearly communicated all over the Bible, especially in the New Testament. Those of us who have been given the Kingdom of God have more than the wealthiest person on the planet, therefore our giving should be the most liberal giving of all those on the planet!

Now with those two universally Biblical ethical expectations about giving squarely in our minds, I want us to dig into Galatians 6:6 so I can show you four important conclusions we need to make and understand from it.

**Proposition: There are four important conclusions we need to make from Galatians 6:6.**

**The first important conclusion is that ...**

- (1) It is almost universally accepted by scholars that the teachers Paul is talking about are the local church pastors who have been called and equipped by God to lead and shepherd His church.
- A. “6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.”
  - B. R. J. Utley noted that is likely refers to , **“one who taught the entire congregation the implications of the teachings of the Apostles as they applied to their daily lives as in pastor/teacher of Eph. 4:11. This last option would be similar to the OT task of the local Levites and, later, professional scribes.”**<sup>1</sup>
  - C. Hendriksen and Kistemaker wote, **“It is worthy of note that even at this very early date there was in existence something similar to today’s official Christian ministry. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11. In a letter that was probably written very shortly afterward the apostle says, “Now we request you, brothers, to appreciate those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work” (1 Thess. 5:12, 13). Paul was a great organizer (Acts 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5). Even during his first missionary journey he was already appointing “elders in every church” (Acts 14:23). That among the several duties of these elders there was also that of imparting instruction is understandable.”**<sup>2</sup>
  - D. The body is certainly called to teach one another. For instance,
  - E. **“16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)**
  - F. However, the ones who are officially tasked with teaching and equipping the body to be able to teach one another are the local church pastors. That is, the pastors of the church are the ones called out by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be responsible for making sure the local church they lead is properly understanding the Word of God, spiritual maturing and producing fruit, and faithfully carrying out the mission of Christ. For instance,
    - 1. **11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,12 to equip the saints for the work of**

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<sup>1</sup> Utley, R. J. (1997). [\*Paul’s First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians\*](#) (Vol. Volume 11, p. 65). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

<sup>2</sup> Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). [\*Exposition of Galatians\*](#) (Vol. 8, pp. 235–236). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

**ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Ephesians 4:11-14)**

- 2. 1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (1 Timothy 4:1-2)**
- 3. 1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:1-4)**

- G.** Therefore, when you read Galatians 6:6 it would be incorrect to conclude that Paul is saying you don't need to bless anybody else with what you have been given. He's not addressing that type of giving, but rather prioritizing how a local church should reward and honor those that who are officially tasked with spending their lives to help them know and follow the Lord and as such experience the abundant life of CHRIST!

**The second important conclusion is that ....**

- (2) The command to give is not based on the value of the teacher or his gifting, but on the value of that which is taught - God's Word!**
  - A. "6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches."**
  - B.** Notice that the call to financially support those who are responsible for teaching you God's Word is not based on the value of the one teaching you but rather on the value of what they are teaching - God's Word!
  - C.** Now this statement put some people on notice. Many scholars feel people were stopping their financial support of those who were teaching them the actual Gospel of Jesus Christ in favor of supporting the ones who had come preaching the legalistic false Gospel of the Judaizers! They may have been better communicators and had better religious resumes than any of the pastors in the

local churches in Galatia, but the “word” they were teaching was worse than worthless, it was a false gospel and as such, it was spiritually destructive. Therefore, there was no ethical reason to give anything to these men other than a harsh rebuke! On the other hand, those pastors who were bearing the burden of leading the church, and as such taking the responsibility of teaching the church the Word of God, these are the men you need to bless!

- D. Quick side note, this does not exempt pastors from financially supporting their local church. Pastors can’t teach generous New Testament giving if they themselves don’t practice it! As such, Pastors who justify not prioritizing giving or claiming their gift to the local church is their teaching and leadership, are clearly overcome with pride and materialism. It’s the equivalency of the jerks for Jesus who give their waitress a Gospel tract as a tip instead of money!
- E. So, Pastors are NEVER exempt from living out the standard of financial giving the Gospel calls us to, but that also doesn’t change the fact that the most valuable gift anybody can give somebody is of itself the Word of God. Listen to what the Bible says about God’s Word and thus what you receive through the labor of those who are responsible for teaching it to you.
  - 1. **105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)**
  - 2. **16 Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. (Jeremiah 15:16)**
  - 3. **16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**
  - 4. **12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)**
  - 5. **23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; 24 for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, 25 but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. (1 Peter 1:23-25)**
- F. Of all the things a person could receive, nothing is more important than God’s Word! It is the truth that set’s us free. It is the power of God unto salvation. It is

the road map to the eternal wealth of eternal life, as well as the motivation and instruction on how to live in it now! There is no education you can receive nor career you could pursue that could possibly compare to what you receive from the Word of God and as such, the obligation and motivation to give in verse 6:6 is not the one who teaches, but rather, the value of the Word of God they taught!

**The third important conclusion is that ....**

**(3) Pastors are as responsible for teaching, as partitioners are for learning.**

- A. “6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.”**
- B.** To be taught doesn't simply mean to hear, but rather to learn in a way that you understand and can teach others. But one cannot learn unless they are first willing to learn and second make the effort to learn.
- C.** Sitting in math class is not how you learn math. When I hear people say they didn't learn anything from going to school I always like to ask them if they took notes in class, worked hard on their homework and class projects, and took legitimate time to study their textbooks on their own. Most of the time the answer is no from those who claim they didn't learn anything in school!
- D.** Likewise, I think a lot of pastors get a bad rap for the Biblical ignorance of their partitioners. Some pastors are terrible preachers, and some pastors don't actually teach the Bible, but rather, refer to it as they talk about whatever it is they want to talk about. However, I believe most pastors at least try to communicate the Word of God, but sadly too many church people are only interested in listening to the Word of God get taught, not learning it.
- E.** Listening to me teach God's Word is an entirely different thing than being committed to learning God's Word! If your committed to learn God's Word then you are listening to me teach it not for the entertainment value of how I deliver it but rather so the Holy Spirit of God can impact you with it. You're listening to try and understand what it is the Bible actually teaches so you can believe it and live it. In addition, if you're really committed to learn God's Word then you're not only going to listen to me teach it but you're going to find others ways to access it and learn it. As pastors, part of the way we are leading the church to know the Word of God is through life groups, small group Bible studies, podcasts and blogs we put online, and all kinds of other things. But none of that is worth anything if you don't use it.
- F.** I also understand not everybody is a good reader but be encouraged, for most of human history, including most of church history, most followers of Christ couldn't read; and even if they could read, they likely had no access to a copy of the Bible! Its only in recent human history that literacy rates have dramatically

changed and access to the Bible has become prevalent. So, if you're here today and you're not a good reader or maybe you can't read at all, there's actually free audio versions of the Bible on the internet. The ESV is totally free, and it has a button you can click and hear it read by a man from the United States or an Irish woman from the United Kingdom!

- G. Furthermore, whether you are good at reading or not, the role of oral teaching has always been one of the most effective ways human beings have learned. Its why shutting schools down for so long during COVID was so detrimental to so many students, they needed a real human standing in front of them teaching them. It's how most of humanity best learns. But you still have to come to worship and Bible studies committed to mentally and spiritually learn the Word of God or all you will do is hear it!

#### **The fourth important conclusion is that**

**(4) The church is commanded to liberally support the pastors who faithfully execute the responsibility of teaching God's Word.**

- A. **"6 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches."**
- B. Sharing all good things certainly doesn't leave out emotional support, friendship, or anything else that could be labeled as a good thing, but scholars almost universally agree that what Paul is specifically talking about here are the finances that enable a person to focus their attention on giving the church the most valuable gift a person can give the church – God's Word! A pastor who is pouring his life into teaching and leading you to know God's Word, and as such have and experience eternal life, is literally serving you in the highest way possible and therefore ethically deserves to be cared for in proportion to how he is caring and for the church.
- C. Now let me clarify something that's really important here. When I say Galatians 6:6 teaches churches to liberally support the pastors who teach them the Word of God that doesn't mean excessively support them! Liberally means you work to truly bless a person but excessively means you are preaching materialism. Excessively supporting a pastor is perhaps more sinful and detrimental to the cause of Christ than underserving a pastor out of stinginess. At least an underserved pastor will bear the fruit of love as he serves a bunch of greedy jerks, but a pastor that's being excessively served is likely a pastor who is failing to faithfully teach and lead the church in the Word of God and as such the church is dominated by worldly materialistic thinking and priorities rather than Kingdom thinking.
- D. However, when a church liberally supports their pastors, their pastors are able to live side by side with the community they are trying to equip the church to



reach. Therefore, if a pastor is serving a church in lower Manhattan, he's going to need to make a lot more money to live and do life with the people who live there, than a pastor leading a church in a rural county in West Virginia. Likewise, a pastor of a church reaching people in uptown Charlotte is going to need a lot more money to afford and do life with the people of uptown Charlotte than me and my family need to try and lead a church and do life with people in Gaston and Lincoln County. My point in saying this is that you can't really put a dollar amount on what liberal support looks like, but you can know when you've truly freed somebody up to live life with the people and community the church is trying to reach and when you haven't.

- E. I understand the manipulation and greed of materialistic pastors across America has made this conversation more difficult. Therefore, for those who are struggling with the concept of a church liberally providing for those who are responsible for leading and teaching the church, let me read some of the other passages of Scripture that directly deal with the subject. This is just a sampling.
- F. **3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. (Luke 10:3-7)**

Note: The apostles were not to take anything with them meaning those whom they were teaching were responsible to provide everything for them. This was a temporary relationship as they preached in that specific town, but it still demonstrates the liberality of support and the ethic behind it.

- G. Perhaps one of the most thorough passages on this subject is in 1 Corinthians. Paul wrote,
- H. **7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? 8 Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? 10 Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. 11 If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 12 If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. 13 Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple,**

**and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? 14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:7-14)**

- I. Perhaps the most direct teaching in the Bible on how churches should liberally provide for the pastors in charge of leading and teaching them the word is in one of Paul's letters to Timothy. He's giving Timothy instructions on how to set leadership in local churches and how they are to function. In that he writes,
- J. **17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17-18)**

**Note:** There are pastors/elders who are not primarily focused on teaching, and they are to be liberally cared for because they are still making sure the church is equipped to know and follow Jesus. However, Paul also says to especially make sure you care for those whose job is not just to lead the church but also carry the primary responsibility of preaching and teaching the Word of God to the entire church.

To bring all this together, I want to take you to one more passage of Scripture, then I'll close with a challenge.

Jesus summed up giving this way, it's called the Treasure Principle. We've set out a book in the lobby written by a guy truly living this principle. It's one of the best books on New Testament giving that I've ever read and you can take one for free. It challenged me big time. But here's the passage of Scripture the entire book is based on.

**19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21)**

So, here's the challenge.

**Challenge:** New Testament giving is a response to the measure of Grace we have been given in Christ, which means we can do nothing short of surrendering ALL our time, talent and money to be used by God however He wants. As such, are you financially supporting your local church as one who has surrendered everything to Jesus; as one who understands the importance of the preaching of the Gospel to save people from eternal damnation; and ultimately as one who understands the significance of the ministry of the Gospel through your local church to your own life and family?

For far too many Christians, the bulk of their financial treasure is completely and overwhelmingly invested in things of this world that moth and rust destroys, and thieves break in and steal! It's amazing to me how so many Christians think the Grace of God that freed us from us from the Old Testament law, filled us with the Holy Spirit and permanently adopted us as Children of God to have His life forever, use that indescribably valuable Good News as an excuse to give less to their local church than what we find as a standard of giving even before the Mosaic Law was given. Abraham gave 10% of all he won in battle to the priest of the God Most High, long before God ever told Moses to teach the people to give ten percent (Numbers 18:21-24) and even longer before the revelation of eternal life in Christ!

Sadly, most Christians not only use the doctrine of grace to give less than 10% of their income to their local church, but some have reported that the average American Christian gives less than 3% of their income to anything that has to do with Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

The idea the doctrine of grace frees us to give less money to Kingdom causes and more money to things of this world is a total misapplication of the Grace of God that I fear comes from a total lack of understanding of what the Grace of God has given us! If you understand the grace of God, then you understand we've been given access to the greatest investment firm in the world! Because we are children of God, we get to invest in the KINGDOM OF GOD that has a return on investment that's literally out of this world! It's an exclusive giving club because you can't invest in it if you aren't a part of it!

So, the idea that I'm only going to give 10% of my finances to the cause of Christ is frankly senseless!! I owe everything to Jesus for what He has already given me, and He just might ask me to truly give it, that's certainly not without Biblical precedence, but the idea that I would justify in mind giving less to the cause of Christ than what He expected from the Jewish believers under the Law and the Old Testament believers prior to that who had even less revelation from God, is frankly irrational!

So, for me and my family, we give away at least 15% of every dollar we earn or receive as a gift. We give at least ten percent to Venture because this is our local church and as such it's our primary partnership in the cause of Christ and, in line with what we just studied, it's the primary place we are being matured in the eternal life of Christ. Our 15% is nowhere near what I know other families give, so I don't hold this up as the holy standard by any means, but simply as a testimony of a family who believes giving ought to be our top priority and as such we have sought the Lord over how much He wants us to give rather than how little.

As such, because we feel we are obeying the Lord, Satan obviously comes along to try and convince us to disobey the Lord. We've been tested numerous times since I became the Lead Pastor of this church in 2002. The first ten years of our ministry here were brutal. We were leading the church to change and as such the church offerings often fell short of what was needed to pay the staff.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bible-commands-christians-to-tithe/>

We went through numerous pay cuts, delayed payments, frozen budgets that required us to work longer hours with less resources to accomplish the same tasks, and even periods of just flat out not getting paid. But through it all, I not only could I shake off the percentage amount we were supposed to give to the church and the other ministries, but I couldn't shake off the actual dollar amount, which means the percentage amount went above 15%. To sustain that through pay cuts, pay delays and even times of not getting paid meant we had to "rice and bean it" with our lifestyle. In addition, Keri and I both had to work all kinds of side jobs on top of the 60 plus hours it takes from me to lead the church, as well as the numerous hours of ministry that Keri gave. It was hard; I got angry at times; I was exhausted, and when things kept getting worse instead of better, I thought about how life would just be easier if I stopped working all the other side jobs and decreased our giving to only giving ten percent to Venture and cut all our other giving out. Every time I would go down that path all I could think of was Jesus telling the rich young ruler to sell all he had and follow Him, as well the people I knew that were living in utter poverty to advance the cause of Christ in the arena they were called in. I kept thinking about the passages like the treasure principle in Matthew 6 and whether or not I actually believed it or not, and every time I found it impossible to anything other than continue laboring to lead the church and doing whatever we had to give the money I felt the Lord calling us to give.

Now some of you are from a school of thinking that you're waiting on the second half of this story to be me telling you about how we won the lottery or something! Normally when you hear that kind of story its followed by, "but now we have money coming out our ears at such a level we can't give it away ... turns out you can't out give God!"

But that's not how this story goes. After almost 21 years of pastoring a growing local church and 32 years of preaching the Gospel, I have no idea if I'll ever be able to financially retire and unless our children get a scholarship there is no way we can afford to send them to a four-year university. In addition, because I took the ministerial option to opt out of social security to save the church from paying employment taxes on my income, I'm not eligible for social security or Medicare. At some point I'm going to have to work a separate job from Venture in a non-church related field so that I can earn enough money from qualified employment to get the minimum work requirements to receive Medicare for Keri and me when we are Senior citizens, otherwise we won't have any health insurance. So, us giving how the Lord led us to give hasn't resulted in the stories you hear people give about how the Lord multiplied their financial wealth, if anything it's been the other way around for us!

I remember we were in the heat of the transition of the church and financially it was brutal but nonetheless we felt led to adopt. We knew a variety of people that had adopted and told us about all the grant money the Lord provided them, some more than they even really needed for the adoption, but after applying to all kinds of grants we didn't hardly get a dime! After we adopted Ada we spent multiple years fighting with the IRS to honor the law that gave about half the cost of the adoption back to us through tax credits, something the IRS tried everything possible to deny us. We finally got it, but that didn't even come easy. We had to work our butts off to make something we were even legally owed happen!

So, what's my point in this sob story, well, that it's not a sob story at all. You see the parts of our story I just shared with you are about the reality of our service in ministry and our financial giving has created for us in context to things of this world. When it comes to that reality there are tons of people in Gaston and Cleveland County who wish they could live in our reality. It would be utterly ridiculous for us to act like we are anything but blessed, if for no other reason than we obviously live an easier life than many people in this region. But even more importantly, the blessing of laboring with Christ and giving our time, talent and money to His Kingdom far outweigh the blessings of anything this world has to offer anyway! We get to experience the blessing of knowing we are investing in an eternal cause that Christ Himself promised will pay us back an eternal reward of eternal measure in His Kingdom. Part of that is already happening! Every time I hear of a life changed through this church or one of the ministries we get to support, I get the joy of knowing I was graciously allowed to labor with Jesus in that cause. The Team Christ saved me into is winning! I'm not a fan in the stands, I'm getting to run the race with HIM and WE ARE WINNNING because HE'S already won! God is bringing life to His people, and we are getting to labor with Him to bring it with our time, our talent and our money! Some will spend a life time making millions but feel like they accomplished nothing, I will likely never make millions but I know what we are accomplishing is worth more than every dollar on this planet!