

Give | Support the Mission



Bro. Kory Cunningham

2 Corinthians 9:7

I don't know about you but I listen to podcasts quite regularly, and one of my favorite one is 'The World and Everything In It.' It's my favorite place to get news from a semi non-biased Christian worldview. I love what they do, but I used to hate listening to that podcast during the month of December. Now, the reason I hate listening to it during the month of December is because the first two minutes of every episode is about how I need to support them with my money. The first one's okay, the second one's okay, but the third and the fourth, and then the 28th time they ask for me to support their podcast, I'm fed up. I'm furious, I'm angry, and what I assume is they just want my money. That's the whole podcast. They're just trying to get my money. I don't know if you've ever had any experience with that, maybe your favorite radio station at the end of the year, it's if you like to listen then you need to support. You're like I don't want to support you I just want to listen to you. Or you get that email...I got an email from the Gospel Coalition a couple days ago. It said I was going to get a free book, and I was like I love free stuff. How many of you love free stuff? Free stuff is awesome, right? So I'm like, yes free stuff, that's great, all they want is my email, submit it, ready for this book. Do you know what? It came up to a give page wanting me to donate money! Now I know what this free book is about, they really just want my money.

I don't know about you, but maybe at times at the end of every Hardin service when you hear "now's your opportunity to give, you can go to hardinbaptist.org/give," you have that same thought... *Oh yeah. Now I know what this church is about. They just want my money. That's why they do all this stuff. They just want my money.*

And as I think about that podcast I listen to, I started to think why do they want my money? Well, because they have journalists who are going all over the world, living all over the world to report good news. And they have offices that they are writing stories in. They have computers, they have podcast equipment, a lot of overhead, a lot of expenses, and a lot of salaries to bring me a free program that is not free. It actually costs a lot. The Gospel Coalition is an amazing resource with thousands of resources that I use all of the time. Well guess what? All those resources cost money. The whole thing costs money. And they're not just trying to get my money, they have a mission to fulfill and the mission requires money. It's just part of the deal. And if you've been rolling your eyes at the end of every service here thinking they just want my money, well the truth is yes, we do want you to invest in what God is doing but it's not just because we want your money; it's because we have a church, we have a mission and a vision that we believe God has given us. And guess what...the mission takes money. The reason it's not eight degrees in here this morning is because this building needs heat. That doesn't magically happen; it actually costs money. We actually have a heat bill. You know what your heat bill is every month, but guess what? Ours is a little bit bigger than yours. We have a little bigger house. There are just some things that cost money. So when we ask you to give, we're not just wanting your money we have a mission that God has given to us.

Now, if it's your first time at Hardin and you're like, "I always heard church was about money and this is case number one; this guy's talking about money." Well, this is not all we talk about. This is actually a sermon in a series about who we are as a church. We've been talking about sort of that thing that staples us as a church—it is we are a sent people. We have that statement, "we are sent," and there are five things that we expect members and people who are committed to our church would want to do.

Those five things are to gather, connect, serve, give, and go. So we've already talked about gathering, we've already talked about serving, we've talked about connecting, and now we're going to talk about giving because we don't think asking you to give is a bad thing. We think it's a good thing because we believe God wants you to invest in the mission that He's given this local church and you, personally, for the sake of His name amongst the nations. So we're going to talk about money for a little bit this morning and what I want to do is go to a place in Scripture where Paul talks about churches that are radically giving for the sake of the mission. Let's look at this example and see how they did it, and then ask how might we give to support the mission here at Hardin Baptist Church. We're going to look at 2nd Corinthians chapter 9, and we're going to read verses 6–7 as our key text this morning.

Scripture

"The point is this: 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."

First of all, does the Bible even talk about money? I mean, why are we even preaching about giving and money and all those things? It's kind of a weird subject. Well actually, there are over 2000 verses in the Bible about money. Actually, there are more verses about money than about faith and prayer combined. So there's a lot of money talk in the Bible and God actually cares about our money and how we spend our money. In the Old Testament, it was pretty simple. There was a thing called a tithe. So if you were a part of the people of Israel, you had to give a tithe. It was like taxes, you had to give it, and it supported the priest, the temples, the ministry, and all the things—you had to give 10% of what you had to the priest to distribute. That was a tithe; it was a command. There were actually three different tithes, and so most of the Israelites would've given close to 20% of their income in a tithe. That was commanded; you had to do it. That would make it easy, I could just say, "You have to do this and we've already direct deposited it out of your account." That would be easy but that's not how church today works. In the New Testament, there's no

command, necessarily, but it is a practice that the New Testament gave, and they didn't just give 10%. Some of them gave everything they had, some of them sold lands; they gave extravagantly to help others and to see the mission go forward. So the Old Testament was commanded, the New Testament was practiced. I think we can say today as Christians who follow Jesus, it is expected that we would be a giving people because we want to give for the sake of the nations; we want to give for the sake of His mission. So giving is an act of worship and participation in God's mission. By giving, you love God, you love others, and you help the gospel get to as many people as possible.

So let's think about giving just money for a second. See, some of us think money in itself is evil because we've heard 1st Timothy 6:10...money is the root of all evil. How many of you heard that verse? That's actually not the verse. A lot of people misquote that verse. It's not money is the root or evil, it's the love of money is a root of evil. That's a lot different. See, some of you have a whole lot of money and some of you have a little bit of money. Money is not good or bad; the way you use money can be good or it can be bad. That's why Jesus in Luke's Gospel will say you can't serve two masters. You'll either love the one and hate the other but you can't serve both God and money, and it says the Pharisees, they love money and so they ridicule Jesus. So money can be a good tool but it is a bad god. We have a temptation to actually worship money as a god, as our protection, as our safety, as our power, as our control. If we have money, we've got life together. But money is amoral—it's not good or bad, it's how you use it. If you hoard it then it can be bad; if you use it, it can be a very good thing. So it's a good tool but a very bad god.

So let's think about giving in general as we look at this New Testament church and how they gave. Let's look at 2nd Corinthians, starting in chapter 8 verse and walk through a few verses. Paul is talking to the Corinthians and he is first going to talk about the Macedonian churches and how they gave, and he is going to use their giving as an example for them to start giving again. The first thing we're going to learn is giving is actually God's grace. Verse 1 says, "We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia." He's talking

about giving here. He's talking about an offering that is going to help others. They are taking up a collection and giving it away to people in need. And notice what Paul calls it...he calls it the grace of God. It's the grace of God; it's been given. So we see this connection of your giving and the grace of God. In other words, when you give, you are participating in God's grace to other people. So giving is not just a thing I have to do, like my church tax, like this is just what I do. No, giving is an act of grace where people are going to be helped and people are going to hear the good news of Jesus. You are bringing grace to people through your giving.

Giving is generosity, notice verse 2, "...for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part." Here are these churches of Macedonia, which are north of Corinth, so like Philippi, Thessalonica—they're giving, and they're a wealth of generosity. But notice what it came from. It came from affliction. There's a hard time. Inflation's happening, and all of a sudden, their money doesn't go as far so they're feeling a squeeze. They're broke and now they're in poverty. And their poverty welled up to a wealth of generosity. Now, does anybody think that sounds really backwards? You would think their riches would well up to generosity, but it's actually their poverty, when they didn't have. When they had deep needs themselves, do you know what they did? They kept giving. They kept giving because they knew others were in need. So what we're going to see is in their giving, God is actually behind it. God is actually fueling it. He is supplying and enabling their giving as they're giving in faith. So their poverty is welling up into a wealth of generosity.

Verse 3 says, "For they gave according to their means..." That means they did their budget and they figured out here are my bills...food, house, taxes...we've got this much left over, instead of saving that, let's invest it in others; let's give it away to others. So that was according to their means. And some of you are very good at giving according to your means. You're adding it up, making sure you've got enough for your bills, and then what you have left over you're giving. It might hurt a bit, but it's also very comfortable. But notice what he goes on to say, "...as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord..." What does that mean? That

means it didn't make sense. If they had taken this to their accountant and said, "Hey, we're thinking about giving this much to the cause, what do you think?" "Uh, you'll go broke. You can't give that much." They're giving above what they have; "beyond their means" is what this early church was giving "of their own accord." In other words, no one is forcing them they're just doing it.

Listen to this in verse 4, "...begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints." They are actually begging the apostles and the pastors... *Can we please help?* And the pastors are like... *Well, you're broke...I know, but can we just help?* They were so overwhelmed by the needs around them that they made sacrifices, they gave according to their means, and also beyond their means to help other believers in Christ. This is a generosity that's welling up from the gospel. But it's not only that the early church gave to meet physical needs, Paul actually wrote to some churches needing support as a missionary to go and take the gospel to Spain. He actually wrote a small letter, it's called Romans, and he sent it to the church in Rome. It's quite a long letter, and in the 15th chapter, he says oh, and by the way, I need some money to go to Spain—that's why I've written you this letter so I can kick the gospel somewhere else. So the early church gave to meet needs, they gave for the sake of getting the gospel to as many places as possible.

So, where does giving begin? We're going to see it doesn't begin in your wallet; it begins in your heart. It begins with you not money. 2nd Corinthians 8:5 says, "...and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." Why were they so extravagant in giving? Why did they give according to their means and also beyond their means? Well here's what happened. They first gave themselves to God. Here's a church that says...God, you own us; we are giving ourselves to you. See, when you give yourself to God, it means God has everything you have. It's this idea of I'm not an owner of my stuff, I'm a steward of my stuff. God actually owns everything. He says in the Bible that He owns the heavens and the earth. He owns everything. He owns everything you have. He owns everything in your wallet. And guess what? When you die, He'll to redistribute it somebody else. You can't it with you.

It's all His. So when you give yourself first to God, you're saying, God, I'm yours and you own everything I have, I'm a steward of all that you've given me. So how can I best use this for your namesake? Notice, when they gave themselves first to God, what did they do next? According to God's will, they then gave themselves to others. They were able to give away some of the things they had because they're first the Lord's. Then because they're the Lord's, now they belong to other people. They were generous with all that they had. So Paul is talking to the Corinthians about these churches in Macedonia and he's reminding them of other believers who are very generous.

Now Paul's going to try to commence them to continue to be generous because it seems to be that the church in Corinth had stopped their regular giving to this cause and Paul wants them to start it back up. Notice with me in verses 6–7, “Accordingly, [as in what these churches are doing] we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.” So he’s saying accordingly, that thing you started? Titus is coming to remind you...you started to give and now you've slacked off...how about you start it again. How about you start giving again to the generosity to take care of the needs of the saints. Then he tells them something...he says I actually want you to excel in giving. I mean notice that idea of excelling—you should excel in everything. Now, we think these are normal Christian things we should excel in, like faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, love. We all know we should be growing in those things. We should be more loving, we should be more kind with our words, we should be growing in knowledge, growing in holiness. Those are things we know we should be growing in. That's called sanctification. We're like Adam, we're being made more like Jesus, and so we grow in those things. But how many of us have thought we're also supposed to be growing in giving? He says you need to excel in this act of grace also. What's the act of grace? It's giving out of what you have to support what others need and for the advancement of the gospel. He says grow in it. Get better at it. Excel in it.

So, for all of us this morning, we need to ask the question, how can I grow this morning in the act of grace called giving? Maybe for some of you, you've never given anything to the local church. Well, maybe this morning it would be just give something. Just give a dollar. Just give a little bit, say... *God, I'm going to give a little bit because I want to participate in all the work that's happening around me.* Maybe you're a regular giver, but it's really comfortable, and what would it look like to be a little bit more of a sacrificial giver? How could you just grow a little bit in your giving this morning? Maybe some of you are extravagant givers and you get so much joy to giving, but you realize you want to give even more. What does it look like to grow and excel in giving this morning? This is not preacher talking; this is Paul telling the church to excel in giving. This is God communicating to us on what does it look like for us to grow this morning in our own giving.

So, how do you convince a people to give? Well, Paul uses an example, and the example is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a pretty good example. Notice what he says in verses 8–9, "I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich." That's his example of why you should give. It's because Jesus gave Himself; He's the ultimate gift. And notice, Jesus was completely rich. God's own Son—in Heaven, created the cosmos, owns the cosmos—do you know what He did? He humbled Himself and became poor. He emptied Himself for our sake so that we who are poor could become rich. We could inherit the Kingdom; we could live with Him forever. What's the correlation? For some of us, we are going to have to lose a little of our riches so that by our poverty others can have, so that through our sacrifice others can get, and others can hear the good news of Jesus. See, our giving is fueled by Jesus giving Himself for us. It's gospel giving. It's not law, hey give 10%...no, it's Jesus gave Himself for you. So in light of that, think about what you might give back to Him for the sake of others and for the sake of the gospel.

It's not just the example of Jesus; there are also benefits in giving. There are benefits to you in giving. I don't know about you, but I love benefits when I spend money. That's why I have a Southwest credit card, because when I use my Southwest credit card enough, do you know what I get? I get a free flight somewhere and it's awesome. Some of you have various cards that give you benefits. We swipe the right cards to get benefits, to get something—we love that—so sometimes buying actually benefits us. Paul's saying giving also benefits. Look at verses 10–15, “And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you...” Giving some of the hard earned money that you have made, giving some of it away actually benefits you. Well, how in the world does it benefit you? Look at the rest of the text, “...who a year ago started not only to do this work but also to desire to do it. So now finish doing it as well [Again, he's trying to get them to give what they have promised] so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have. For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, ‘Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.’” So there is benefit when the body of Christ gives, when there's regular giving. Here's what giving does—when you have abundance, when you have leftover, when you have enough to give, guess what? Someone who doesn't have abundance, someone who can't make ends meet, your abundance supplies their need. And then guess what? A year or two down the road when your supply runs out and now you have a deep need, you know that someone else's abundance supplies your need.

I get to see this work every single day in the life of Hardin Baptist church. It is amazing just to see how this practically works. First of all, just for our community. Every month we have a financial committee that meets together with people in the community. We give around \$2000-\$2500 every month to people in the community for individual needs—people who have electric bills, water bills, gas bills, rent, and other various needs. We have a food pantry, which you supply through your giving. People can go

anytime they want, absolutely free, and get food so that they can eat. That's just one way that your abundance supplies real needs. But when there's a need in the body of Christ, if a member of our church has a need, it's not the financial committee it's our deacons who take care of that. I can't think of one example of a need that hasn't been met. It's unbelievable how you guys care for one another through your abundance. Every week you get to meet needs of people in this body, and just by circumstance that you might even not know, there might be a time in a year or two when you need that exact same assistance. And guess what? The deacons will be here to serve you as well. It is phenomenal. I mean just this week a police officer called the church and said, "It's really cold and there's a single lady and she's a double amputee, and the place she's staying at doesn't have heat and she might freeze to death. What we really need is help with a motel room for about a week during this cold spell. Is there anything you guys could do?" We said, "Of course, yes, put her up, we love her; let her know that, let us know what we can do." Through your abundance, we were able to put this lady up and she's probably alive because you gave! That's just one example of many this week. People come to the office who have a need, and through our abundance, we get to meet so many needs. There is so much benefit. You're not just clicking a button, you're not just giving some money, that actually does real things and meets real needs, and you should know that there is a benefit to that. You're serving people and people are able to serve you, so give because have to do so many things with what you give.

In chapter 8:16 through chapter 9:5, basically Paul's working out how Titus is going to deliver it and how Paul's going to pick it up. And then in verses 6–7, we see this joyful giving, which is kind of our key passage. Here's what it says, "The point is this: 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." He's saying here's the point, I'm going to use a farm illustration—if you sow sparingly then you're going to reap sparingly. If you're a farmer and you just put a few seeds out because that's a lot of money so you're going to spend a little bit...then you're going to have a little harvest. Only a few things are going to grow.

But if seed's expensive, but you're going to sacrifice and spread a lot of seed on the ground, then you're going to have a greater harvest. The more you sow, the more you reap. That's usually a bad thing, but in this case, it's a good thing. That's what he's saying...in the act of giving, the more you give the more harvest is going to be. As a church, the more we give the more harvest we see. Personally, the more you give the more harvest you're going to get to see as we build the Kingdom of God through the grace of God.

And then, he's doing a little work with us, personally. He says "each one." That's like each one of us...each one must give how? A certain amount, 10%, 20%...no. Notice what it says, "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion." So it's not because you have to. It's not like...*man, I hate giving. Fine, I'll do it.* No, it's not reluctant, it's not because you have to, it's because you want to. It's because your heart has decided I love the mission, I love the gospel, I want to help people, I want to do good with what I have been given. And then, it says this, "...for God loves a cheerful giver." When you give, when you make the decision to give, God smiles. God loves it when His church doesn't hoard all of their things but instead gives some of them away so that others can be blessed and the gospel can go forth.

Some are thinking...*yeah, but man I don't have much seed to sow, and I don't know, I think I need to keep it all.* Well, Paul's going to remind them that they don't own the seed and they don't supply the seed, actually God does. Notice what we see in verses 8–9. I love this. "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, 'He has distributed freely, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.'" So notice God is able, God is the one who is giving to the poor through our giving. And then notice verses 10–12 say "He who supplies seed." Who's that? That's God. You're not the supplier of the seed; God is. "...to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only

supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.” So he's saying as you give, as you spread seed, as you put money in the plate, as you go online and give, it's actually God that's supplying that seed. God is the one who has the storehouse. You have your little sack; God's got more. As we sow, it's going to be multiplied. As we sow, it will continue. So there's this faith act that I don't know that I should give, but if I give, God is more than likely going to give me more so I can keep giving more away. It's this principle of God is the one who has the seed. I've seen this time and time again, people write checks for VBS offering that I cannot even imagine looking at it, only to hear that three weeks later that exact amount was the exact amount they had left over from a certain deal they just made. It's unbelievable to see this crazy act of crazy faith when you don't have what you have, and then all of a sudden when you make that crazy act for a good cause, it then gets multiplied and comes back so that you can do more good with that over and over again. God is supplying the seed that you sow. We've got a sack and we're so afraid to get rid of our sack because the sack is all we have, but just know God has the storehouse; there is more seed to be had. And so we give in faith knowing that God is the one who ultimately supplies.

And then we see that really giving is connected to the gospel. Our belief in the gospel fuels our giving. Notice verse 13, it says this, “By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because...” notice that act of glorifying God—your giving is going to create worship in other people. As you give, people will be helped and they'll thank God. As you give, people will hear the good news and they will commit their lives to Christ, and they will worship God. Giving is a way of fueling worship and it's also connected to the gospel. They will glorify God. Why are they glorifying God? “...because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ.” Your submission to what? To giving, to coming under God's authority and saying I'm going to believe you and I'm going to give, I'm going to submit to the act of giving. What is that submission connected to? It's connected to your confession of the gospel. In other words, your belief in who Jesus is—Creator of the universe, who became a man to die in your place and rise again and is seated at the right hand of His father, and

who's coming back to bring His Kingdom—your belief in Him, your belief in confessing Him as Lord, fuels your giving. In other words, when you give you're believing the gospel. You're saying yes to Jesus...*I believe you own everything and I believe you're my Lord so I'm going to give because I want more people to help and I want more people to hear about you.* So our giving is connected to our confession that Jesus is Lord. He's also Lord of our wallets. He's Lord of our bank accounts. So we're going to bring all of that under His lordship.

And then notice it says, "...and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, (v.14) while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you." Verse 15, "Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!" He's talking about giving all those gifts that they're giving to help other people to get the gospel at all places, and then he says let's just take a moment and thank God for His gift, His inexpressible gift. What is that? It's His Son Jesus Christ. That God gave Christ for us. So the application is we get to mirror that in worship. We get to display that by the way we give back to Him in worship and in love for others, and to support the mission that He's given us. So because God is a giver, we get to give. Giving reflects God who gives us Jesus in the gospel.

So what does the Bible say about money Old Testament? How much do you need to give? 10–20%. In the New Testament, it's a pattern; it's practiced. Right now, it seems it'll be expected for us to continue to give for those same purposes. So what I want to do is to answer four questions.

1. How much should you give?
2. What does your giving pay for? In other words, what do we do with your money at Hardin Baptist Church?
3. How do you give to Hardin Baptist church?
4. Why in the world should you give?

So the first one—how much should you give? Some of you would love a number. Some of you would love for me to say 10%. Boom, give that and you're faithful. The law's just easier. The law is comforting. Give me the rule, I'll follow it, and then I'll go live my life. But we're not under the law

anymore; we're under grace and grace is a little different. Grace says there's not a hard fast rule. There's not a tax that we're going to take out of your direct deposit. No, it's about a matter of your heart. It's for you to decide between you and the Lord. How much does grace in your life require you to give? In other words, how much should you give? I don't know. That's the answer. I don't know. But God does...and if you seek Him, God will make sure that you know what giving looks like for you. And giving might change in different seasons, in different times, different circumstances. I don't know how much you should give. Old Testament 10 to 20%, New Testament, we see generous giving. In Acts 2, some of the people sold all that they had and just put it in a bucket and said just spread it all out. Some of you are like do I have to do that? I'm not saying that, but if God compels you to do that. Some people sold land, they sold stuff because they knew there are needs and the gospel needs to go forth so they were radical in their giving, this pattern of just giving beyond their means.

So how should we give today? Well, give according to the gospel; give according to the grace in your life. As we saw, 2nd Corinthians 9:7 I think is a good verse for you to wrestle with to think about how much you should give. It says this, "Each one must give as he decides in his own heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." So you should decide in your heart how much the Lord wants you to give. And if really have no idea what you personally should give, then if I was counseling you I would say to maybe start with 10% and just grow from there. That seems like the Old Testament, just the bottom line, and then grow from there. Try to go for more, try to get 11, try to get 12. Try to increase because we see Paul telling us to excel in our giving. Maybe you're like, there's no way I can give 10%. Well give 1%, give a half percent, give a dollar. It's not how much you give, it's how much of you is in the gift. I mean think about the widow's mite in that parable. All these guys are giving just tons of money and they're all smiling...*everybody look at me!* And this little widow comes in and drops a penny in and Jesus says she gave more than anybody else. Everybody's like, no she didn't, she gave a penny. Yeah, she gave everything she had so it's actually more to God. See, God doesn't need your money He needs you. He needs your heart and

your heart is often connected to your money. So that's a way to worship him. It's a personal decision for you. Some of you have the gift of giving. Romans chapter 12, verse 8 says if your gift is giving, then give generously. Some of you have the gift of giving so for you 10% would not be enough; I'll give away 90 and keep 10. If you have the gift of giving, that's what you love and that's what you do. The sky's the limit under grace to how much the Lord might call you to give for the sake of His gospel among the nations. So, how much do you give? I don't know. That's when you and the Lord decide in your heart and just give something. Start with a dollar, start with a percent, start with 10%, start somewhere, and just try to excel in the act of giving.

What does your money do? When you give to Hardin, what does it look like? How do we spend your money? I think you should know that. How are we sowing the seed that you're giving? Let's look at last year, 2023. You gave almost \$2.5 million as a church through the regular giving. That's pretty awesome. That's a giving church. So what do we do with that? 39% of that went to pay staff and employees. We have 29 staff and employees of this church that include pastors, counselors, custodians, all sorts of ministry directors, and leaders that you pay, and they like to eat so thank you for giving because it helps them to do those things. If you google average payroll expense on staff of a church, it's usually between 50 and 60 so we're actually doing pretty good there. We spend 19% of our budget on missions directly outside of Hardin—Brazil and Nicaragua and all those things that we do in all those places, almost 700,000 just to missions. But then we have 10% we give to the KBC, which is also the SBC, which is the International Mission Board, the North American Mission Board, church planting. So really if you put those two together, we give about 29% of your giving goes towards missions, which I'm super proud about. That's actually kind of unbelievable because you're an unbelievable church who loves missions. So you should smile about that if you're a giver that you are giving that much to missions just by online giving or putting offerings in the plate. Then 15% goes to facilities and just normal bills. Like the heat is on today, the lights are on. We have all sorts of expenses. We just put a new high school room and middle school room in the back here. Those cost money so it goes to all of those type things. 16% is operating costs

like buying flowers for people who are sick, donuts in the foyer, all the things that's just run of the mill stuff that we have to do. 6% goes to department expenses like kids, youth, college. We took a hundred people to snow cross and you paid for half of that trip so that kids could hear about biblical sexuality and the need to wait for marriage, which we think is pretty important. VBS expenses come out of that. 3% is for local outreach, just all the things that happen locally that we give to and help in. Then 2% is for tech and music. Like live stream is happening right now and it's kind of expensive and all this sound equipment, it's kind of expensive. So that's how we spend the giving that you give.

Hopefully you think, well, Hardin's doing a decent job at the gifts that I'm giving. I think they're mission-minded, I think we're trying to lean into the gospel and helping people and going places and doing things. And just a note—through your giving, we're able to support 21 missionaries outside of our church. That's pretty crazy, right? We have nine missionaries in Brazil. If I had time, I'd love to go through each one of these. We have people in the Middle East and Nicaragua and Malawi, in Arizona, in Indonesia, all sorts of campuses on different places all throughout, there's so many people that you're directly helping because you are giving. It's just amazing. Alan and Tina Haley are getting to go and build houses for ladies who are coming out of sex trafficking and need a place to stay through Eight Days of Hope, and you are helping. They are missionaries that go and build those places. There's so many things that you are doing with your money, it's incredible.

So now that you've seen a little bit of what it goes to, one of the other questions is how do you give. We can give online or in person. In person, you drop your offering in the boxes on your way out, either with envelope or cash. You can also give online and we encourage online giving. It's really been easy and successful for us. You can go to hardinbaptist.org/give. This is our give page and you click GIVE NOW. You put the amount you want and then you give once or give multiple times for a recurring gift. You can give every week, every two weeks, every month. So you decide here's how much the Lord's given me, what does it look like to give faithfully? Then you simply fill in your credit card info or your bank

account information. A bank account does save a little bit on fees so more of your money goes directly towards the mission. So we would encourage that if you can. For me and my wife, this has been life changing because I remember we used to bring checks and then if we forgot to bring them a few Sundays, so we would have to make those up. It's just man, we've committed, the Lord gets the first, and we really, really like to set it to come out automatically. If you need help with that, Sandi King, our financial secretary, would love to help you with any questions about online giving, change your offering, or sign up for offering envelopes for your in person checks and cash. You can email her at sandi@hardinbaptist.org. You can also just go to the website; it's pretty easy to navigate to the give tab. Also just call the church office. We have a fantastic staff that would love to help you.

So lastly, why give? Hopefully we've dealt with this, but it's to worship God, love people, and support the mission. That's why you give. And I do just want to put a seed in your mind to say we do have dreams as a church. We have a lot of dreams and dreams require money. One dream is that we would send more and go more. We want to send more people through our church to plant churches and to be missionaries. We want to go more places as mission teams. We'd love to do that. We just don't have enough in the bank to do that. So that's our dream. We also have a dream of more seating and more meeting spaces. So I don't know if you know this, but our college meets downtown in our old facility. They go there for college group and then they come here for worship. On Wednesday nights, our youth go there and then come here and it's just a little taxing and we don't have the best facilities for them. We would love big dream to turn our sanctuary here into an awesome college and youth space. That would just be unbelievable. And then we would love to build a sanctuary off of here that would fit all of us, because if you look around, we're almost packed out. And there are two other services that are almost packed out. So it'd be kind of cool to have a little more space where your neighbor wouldn't feel packed out when they came. So we've got dreams. We need a lot more small group space. On Wednesday night we're completely out, people are meeting in closets and all sorts of spaces. So we have dreams that we would love to see happen, and dreams take money. So we're praying that

the Lord would meet some of these dreams and they would become reality. Another dream is more hiring and more ministry. We need more people to help in the mission that God has given us. But guess what? That also requires more giving more money. And I want to say you are a phenomenal church of giving. Just come to VBS and look at the offering. It's crazy, right? You do so good at giving. The question is how can you excel just a little bit in that? Maybe for some you who give none, you could you give a little. If you give a little, could you give a little more? Maybe you give a lot, could you give a little bit more of a lot? Because we really believe that God's given us a mission to fulfill.