

7 Commitments of a Forerunner (Power Encounters in the Realm of Finance)

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

I'm going to take the first few moments and continue on the seven commitments of a forerunner in the teaching notes. I'll talk about leading diligently for about five minutes, because it's important, but I want to spend the majority of the time on what I call "power encounters in the realm of finance." We know about power encounters when we pray for the sick and they get healed. "Wow, the Lord moved in power!" God means and desires to 'wow' our heart in the realm of money, too. He wants the right people to have money for the right reasons. I believe that the Lord's desire for many of you is to entrust you with an increase of money beyond anything you can imagine right now. Some of you will have tremendous wealth, but the Lord only wants to give it to you if you'll partner with Him in establishing the increase of the gospel in the earth with that wealth. Right now, when you're in your twenties—that's when the cement is drying—so to speak. The Lord wants to write these values on your cement and He wants it to dry in the right way.

DON'T LOSE THE FLAME OF ABANDONMENT

Many, but not all, believers find when they get into their thirties, forties, and fifties that the cement has dried. They've already abandoned this idea of giving their money to God in a radical way. They'll give Him the surplus but they won't give Him money in challenging ways on a regular basis. Young people, teenagers and twenty-somethings, are still fresh and ready to go. I've watched over the years many twenty-year olds become thirty, and they lose that abandonment because the cement didn't dry in the right way in this area.

PREPARING FOR TOMORROW WITH DILIGENCE TODAY

I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's talk about leading diligently first. That's one of the seven commitments of a forerunner. Being a forerunner involves leading today and taking initiative in ministry now: not just preparing for the future, but actually moving in ministry today to touch people and glorify God while preparing for even greater ministry in the days to come.

DILIGENCE IS THE KEY EMPHASIS IN LEADERSHIP

Paul said, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them" (Rom. 12:6). Let's use the gifts. Use them; don't bury them. Don't put them on the back burner. Use them. "If prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering ... he who leads, with diligence ..." (vss. 6-8). Leading with diligence. Many people lead with skill, and have great ability, but they lack diligence. Diligence is the issue the Holy Spirit focuses on in the realm of leadership. Humility, of course, is a given. But the Spirit wants us to be diligent not only when other people are watching, but also when no one is watching—because we know God is watching.

WHAT IS DILIGENCE?

B. The definition of diligence: making constant effort to accomplish what is taken with persistent exertion. That's the dictionary definition of diligence. You're going for it. Diligence involves investing time, investing energy. You can't be diligent if you don't invest time and energy. It takes risks, it takes a servant spirit, it takes developing your God-given gifts—the way musicians practice, and the way people do other things in many other areas in the Body of Christ.

ASK THE LORD TO SHOW YOU HIS PLANS

Paragraph C. Here is where I want to challenge you. Again, we'll spend a few minutes on this one and then we'll move over to the finances. I want to tell you a bunch of stories that I think will encourage you. Ask the Lord not once, but regularly, "Lord, give me insight into Your plan to win my campus. What is Your plan to win my high school, my college, my city, my nation? Tell me a little of Your plan, and show me a little of my role in Your plan."

If you ask that question regularly, you'll begin to get divine ideas, and creative ideas. I've met people all the time in my thirty-five years of being a pastor who tell me that one of the biggest pains in their life is condemnation and failure. Let's put that one aside. That's the big one. The next big one is, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do." I've heard that 10,000 times—maybe not that many, but maybe. That's the major pain besides condemnation. "I don't know what I'm supposed to do." The twenty-year olds say it, the thirty-year olds say it, the forty-year olds say it, the fifty-year olds say it, the sixty-year olds say it: "I don't know what to do."

Many of them never actually ask the Lord on a consistent basis, "What do You want me to do?" Instead, they wait for the leadership to call them out and tell them what to do. Don't wait on leaders to tell you what to do; ask God and then do it. It's a really different perspective.

DON'T WANT FOR A LEADER; GO OUT AND MINISTER NOW

I was blessed by being raised in a Presbyterian church that was really connected to Campus Crusade for Christ. I was a part of that church for five years in a really committed way. Campus Crusade was my early beginning. That whole ministry was all through our Presbyterian church. I so honored our leaders. I was sixteen years old and I was a part of the youth group.

The leader came to me and said, "What are you doing?"

I had only been in the Lord six months, and I said, "What do you mean, what am I doing?"

He said, "Who are you ministering to?"

I said, "I don't know."

He said, "Are you leading a Bible study?"

I said, "No."

He said, "Why not?"

"Why not? No one told me to."

He said, "Who's supposed to tell you to? Do you have a Bible? Do you have the Holy Spirit? A lot of people need help. That's good enough. Go do it."

I was six months old in the Lord at sixteen years old, and I said, "How?"

He said, “You’ll figure it out. Just call a night, tell five or ten kids, half will show up, stay with it, start with five, grow to eight, grow back down to four, grow back up to ten, and stay with it for a year or two. You’re in the ministry.”

I said, “Is that it?”

He said, “You’re in the ministry.”

I said, “Wow!”

THE BEGINNING: A BIBLE STUDY AT DAIRY QUEEN

We all did it. We had a big youth group in our Presbyterian church of about a thousand young people who had been saved. Many of them were leading Bible studies. No one told us when, where, or how. We just started those Bible studies because the leaders said, “Start them! Don’t wait on me. I’m not going to tell you what to do. Just start them. Do you want to start outreaches? Pick three friends, pick them up on Saturday, go some place and start it. I won’t tell you where; you do it.”

“OK, I’ll start.” I did that. I had a dynamic junior high ministry of eight people. It wasn’t very dynamic, I promise you. I had to buy their Dairy Queen treats to talk them into showing up. I thought it was a great idea. I said, “If I pick you up and buy you ice cream afterwards, will you come?” I realized I was bribing them but, hey, I liked it. They came. It grew to eight, and even ten on some days. The next year I stayed with it and it grew to thirty.

I was in the ministry and I was a senior in high school. I was so burdened by it. There were saints I had to care for. I was on the football team, and this team and that team, but I tended the flock. I had only been a believer for about a year and a half back then. I had this weight of responsibility, because my leaders just told me to take it; they didn’t tell me when, where, or at what school. They said, “Go pick a middle school. Just pick one.”

I said, “Which one?”

“Any one!”

I said, “I’ll pick the closest one.”

They said, “Good idea.”

That’s what I did. Beloved, it’s that easy. Go get two or three friends and get them to help you. If it gets to eight, cool. If it grows to four, that’s really how it goes.

MIKE’S COLLEGE BIBLE STUDY

Then I went to the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri. I was eighteen years old, nineteen—go Tigers! Anyway, I played on the football team there. I talked to a few of the football players. I was the rookie, the smallest man on the team, and I’m not even being humble here. I was the least gifted. These men were big and fast and I was the smallest and the slowest. I said, “What am I doing on this team?” I figured to myself, “Obviously, I’m not going to be the star here. You know what I’ll do? I’ll start inviting them to a Bible study.”

I called a Bible study. I thought, “I did it with the junior high; I’ll do it with these guys, and see if they come.” Five or six men started coming. It shocked me. I made a little pamphlet: “Thursday night Bible study.” I didn’t put my name on it. No one had ever heard of me. “Nine o’clock, Tiger Towers Apartment.” I went to a Xerox machine and made a thousand copies. I passed them out randomly throughout the college. The next week I made another thousand. I didn’t tell anyone I was passing these out. I was the leader, and I was too embarrassed. I imagined them saying, “You little whippersnapper, I’m not coming if you’re leading.”

They said, “Who’s leading?”

I said, “Well, you never know who might lead.” I was way too embarrassed.

A few of the football players came, a few people I didn’t know, and there were people to whom I had randomly gave out little flyers—handwritten—not cool, not state of the art. I wrote, “Bible Study, 9:00pm, come!” What a weird, nothing handout, but I made thousands of them. I found a man who played a guitar and said, “Have you ever led worship songs?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “Are you willing to learn some?”

He said, “Yes, what do you mean?”

I said, “Holy, holy, hallelujah...”

He said, “Yes, I’ll learn them.” He was my first worship leader. He had never led worship, ever, and he was scared to death.

NOT EVERYONE CAN TEACH, BUT YOU CAN LEAD A DISCUSSION

Thirty people came. I gave thousands of flyers out, and thirty came. I was so nervous, I was sick to my stomach. Five or six football players came, and about twenty-five of the others. The next week we had forty; the next week, twenty, the next week, thirty, the next week, forty, then fifty, then twenty, and on and on and on. Who cares what the numbers were? It ended up growing over a year or two to about 200 every single Thursday night. My Presbyterian leaders told me to start small groups. I had three little discipleship groups. I told everyone, “Find three people and start a discipleship group. Just start it.” I told them what my leaders told me: “Just go start discipleship groups.”

These guys said, “I don’t know anything about the Bible.”

I said, “Take a book, a Christian book, whatever book you like, buy a copy for three or more people, give it to them, study the book through the week, and then have a discussion group.”

You don’t have to be a Bible teacher. Study the book together, and the Bible teaching is already done for you. I had lots of them starting small groups and discipling people. Beloved, I was in the ministry and didn’t even know it. That was the view of ministry that I was taught.

Ask God, “What’s Your plan to reach my campus? Give me one idea of something I can do.” Not everyone is a Bible teacher, but you can be a discussion group leader with three people reading a book. You can encourage them; you can assist the one leading the Bible study.

OUR COPYRIGHT IS THE RIGHT TO COPY

When we grew to 200, we needed a sound man. Then we needed an overhead projector to put the music up. Then we needed an usher to set the chairs up. We had a full-on ministry—ushers and everything. I was so excited, but I was nervous because I didn’t know the Bible at all, and I didn’t like studying the Bible. Remember, I didn’t like the Bible. I believed it, I valued it, but I didn’t like to read it. I was in a jam because I had to prepare a message. I would take everyone’s teachings and memorize them—not exactly, though—I wasn’t smart enough to memorize them exactly, word for word, but I had twenty pages of notes. My notes were exactly like this: “Welcome, my name is Mike Bickle.” I’m not kidding. “I really am glad you’re here.” You think I’m kidding! I had thirty pages of notes for a thirty-minute message. I took it straight out of the books. I didn’t have an original thought in my mind. That’s why I tell people, “Our copyright is the right to copy,” because I was so grateful to steal everyone’s everything. I felt guilty about it, but not guilty enough to stop because I was desperate. I’ve had this for many years: “Our copyright is the right to copy.” I don’t want you feeling guilty. Take it, run with it, put your name on it, put your mother’s name on it, I don’t care. It’s yours.

Someone said, “I bet those college students are just using you; they’re taking your notes word for word and putting their name on it.”

I said, “Using me? It sounds like God is using them. That’s what it sounds like to me. I think we got them on that.” Again, I felt bad about stealing everything, but not bad enough to stop.

THE THINGS MIKE LEARNED FROM NOT KNOWING ANYTHING AT ALL

Here was the problem. I was nineteen years old at the University of Missouri. A man would say, “Hey, what did you mean when you made that one point?”

I said, “I don’t know.”

He said, “What do you mean, you don’t know?”

I said, “I don’t know what that means.”

“But you said it.”

I said, “I’ll get back next week with the answer.” That’s how I began. I was sick to my stomach to talk to thirty people. On the Tuesday before Thursday night, I was more nervous about my Bible study than the football games. (Granted, I was sitting on the bench anyway, so it didn’t matter.) It was just so risky. What if they don’t come? Sometimes they didn’t.

Then, I started a Bible study at Warrensburg, because the University of Missouri was two hours from my home in Kansas City and Warrensburg was only one hour away. When I came home on the weekends from the university, I would go by this other college campus. I stopped there as a stranger, made my little handouts, passed them out, got a room, and had thirty people every single week. No one knew I didn’t go to school there.

They said, “What do you major in?”

“Well, you know, I’m just trying to figure out my major.” Which was true: I didn’t know what I was going to major in. I was so nervous. It was scary. What if they didn’t come, what if I fumbled the ball, what if I tripped and it was bad? It was. My teaching was terrible, but I learned so much. Every now and then a spark would encourage someone. I just stayed with it. That’s how you stay in the ministry.

“WHERE IS THE HARVEST FIELD?”

Paragraph C. Ask God, “Where is the harvest field?” Don’t wait for someone to tell you. Ask God, “Where is the harvest field?” Maybe you’re going to help some girl or guy in a home group on your campus. That’s the beginning of your harvest field. Maybe you’re going to start a prayer furnace and you’re going to get up there and be the first one to pray and set up a few chairs. That is where you start. Don’t wait for them to ask you. Make yourself indispensable by serving and being diligent. Don’t ask for the key spots up front; serve in the back and just do it. Do what no one else will do.

Paragraph D. I tell people to ask two questions: “What needs to be done?” and, “What do you want to do?” When you’re on your campus, say, “Lord, what needs to be done?”

He may say, “They need you to set up chairs, open the door, get the thing set up, and clean up afterwards.”

Do what needs to be done, and later on God will let you do what you want to be doing. In other words, everyone has a notion of what they would like to do, but don’t wait until you get what you like. Do what needs to be done. That’s the key. Make yourself indispensable, because you’ll do the task no one else wants to do. Just do it. Then, over time, God will let you do what He put it in your heart to do. Don’t start with, “What do I want to do?” Start with, “What needs to be done?”

YOU ALWAYS CAN LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Paragraph E. Some people wait for years. I’ve watched this for thirty-five years of ministry. They wait for ten, twenty, thirty years.

“Bro, what are you doing?”

“Well, I’m waiting on the will of God.”

“Dude, it’s thirty years later. Waiting on what?”

He’s waiting for someone to invite him up to the platform to give him a microphone. I say, “Forget that!” Just get three people and disciple them in your home; don’t ask anyone’s permission. Those three will lead three more. Just do it for a few years, and guess what? You’ll have a teaching ministry. You may never get on a platform, but you’ll change many lives. You may be on a platform, but forget the platform. Do what needs to be done and be helpful.

The thing that separates real leaders from lazy dreamers is that real leaders do stuff. They just do it. They don’t wait until it’s big, they don’t wait until it’s famous, they do it when it’s little and they do it when no one is watching. They go help other people. That’s what real leaders do. There are so many lazy dreamers in the Body

of Christ. “I’m going to change the nation!” They have all these visions but they don’t do anything. They’ll do it for three weeks in a row, but you can’t count on them for six months in a row. They won’t show up. They always have an excuse: “I’m sick. The Lord said ‘no.’ The Lord showed me this... , the Lord, the Lord, the Lord...” You’re just lazy. Show up—not an hour late. Show up on time—five minutes early is better—and show up prepared.

“Prepared? But they didn’t ask me to teach!” Know where the vacuum cleaner is so you can clean the room before the meeting starts. Come prepared. Come prepared to help. Show up on time, stay the whole time, and don’t leave half an hour early when no one is looking. Give yourself to serving. Get three people, have a meeting in your home, meet in a restaurant, read a book together and discuss it, do it for twelve weeks in a row, and guess what? You’re discipling the younger believers. Lead diligently.

Let’s move on to the next one. I went too long on that, but I have a lot of energy about it. I still think MissU missed it: I would have been a good football player. They let me sit on that bench. Never mind, never mind!

THE JOY OF GIVING EXTRAVAGANTLY

Page fifty-seven. Giving extravagantly. The joy of what I call financial power encounters. Here is what a power encounter is: we give money and the Lord returns that money in the amount and the timing that makes you sure He’s giving it back to you simply because you gave it first. In other words, I would give an exact amount of money and, within a week, the exact amount would come back to me. That had never happened before. I said, “How did that happen?”

The Lord would say, “I’m giving you the right amount in a proper time because I want to ‘wow’ your heart.”

That happened maybe twenty or thirty times in my first five or six years of being a believer. I would give money away and the Lord would give it back in a very specific way. My leaders, my Campus Crusade Presbyterian leaders, had told me, “Start discipling people and give money to missions.” I didn’t know any better, so I just did what they told me to do. All of us had stories of God giving us money back. I thought everyone lived that way. When I went to different places, I learned that my Presbyterian Church wasn’t so common. Some other places did it, but I had very dynamic leaders who taught us this fundamental principle.

THE TRAGEDY IN OUR FAILURE TO TITHE

We give extravagantly. That implies giving beyond your tithe, which is ten percent of your income. A lot of believers don’t even tithe; they don’t give the ten percent. I want to say this kindly, but I want to say it as a shepherd: that’s unthinkable to me. Not tithing is unthinkable. I don’t mean because God will be mad. Tithing, giving ten percent of your money, is something that by the grace of God I have done all these years.

In our early years of marriage when we first got married, Diane and I decided that we would double tithe and we would never back away from that, ever. I would never be content with just tithing. I’m not content with double tithing, either. I want to give much more than twenty percent of my income. The reason I’m saddened that so many believers don’t buy into this is not because they’re sinful and God is mad at them. No, it’s not that. It’s because they’re missing the exhilaration of power encounters in the realm of money. They don’t have any stories. The reason they don’t have any stories is because they never get out of the boat and into the water. They don’t ever do their part, and the stories never happen.

BUILD A HISTORY WITH GOD AND MONEY

My leaders told me back then, “Build a history with God and with your money. Start giving money faithfully and sacrificially. God will return it and you’ll build a history.” In other words, “You and God will have a story that will build your faith all the days of your life.” I remember when I first met my wife. I was twenty-two and she was twenty-one. I had been a believer for six years and she had been a believer for about six months. We were engaged. She is amazing. I’ll have her come up at the end and pray for you, and even say a few statements about this. She was a brand-new believer. I remember us being engaged and excited. She was taught to save money. By the way, saving money is biblical. I read a bunch of biographies of these great missionaries who gave everything away. I had read maybe ten of them by then. My heroes were all these guys and gals from history who gave everything away and went to the hardest and the darkest places of the earth. That’s what I wanted to be. I would read these stories and say, “That’s me.” I had no thought of saving money, though it’s a biblical principal. I don’t want to go off on that right now, though. I just want to tell some stories.

She was trained to save money. Her dad was very frugal. She had been six months in the Lord and I had been six years. I was pastoring a little church out in the country. It was a little, 100-member church out in the country of the St. Louis area. I met her and we were saving money.

She said, “Just out of curiosity, how much money have you saved?”

I said, “What do you mean?”

At twenty-one years old, she had already saved \$5,000 from working at a restaurant at the ages of sixteen and seventeen. She said, “I was taught to save. How much have you saved?”

I said, “Nothing. Why would you save money?” Again, I’m not saying the theology of this is great; I would say it differently now.

She said, “Why would you *not* save money?”

I said, “I give almost all of it away, and God gives the money back in miraculous ways.”

She said, “What?”

I said, “I have about thirty stories—not that I’ve counted them.”

She said, “What do you mean?”

“I gave \$500 away, and mysteriously, God provided \$1,000 back.”

She said, “No way!”

I said, a little arrogantly, “You mean to tell me that you have never had God give you money?”

She said, “You mean to tell me you have never saved money?”

I said, “Whoa, we have a way to go here.” Both are biblical principles. I said, “Hm.” I was six years old in the Lord; she was six months old. That was cheating. I had the upper hand. I had the stories.

She can defend herself when she comes up, but she agreed. That’s the point I’m making strongly. I said, “When we get married next month, here is what I want to do: I want to take the whole \$5,000 and give it away to missions, all of it. I want us to have stories. The stories will be awesome.”

She said, “OK. Here’s my only condition: don’t over-emphasize it to my father just yet.”

MIKE AND DIANE’S FIRST EXPERIENCE IN GIVING

We got married the next month—we had a short engagement—so we came back from the honeymoon and took the \$5,000 and gave it all away to missions. I was so excited. She was in. She said, “I’m for it. It’s new, it’s a lot of money, but I’m going for it.” We were around twenty years old. This was way back, thirty-five years ago. That’s like a million years today. I’m exaggerating a little.

Well, eighteen months went by and nothing happened. She wasn’t being negative; she just said, “How does this work?”

I said, “I don’t know. The timing is always strange. I’ve never had an eighteen-month delay.”

She said, “You’ve never given \$5,000 away, either.”

I said, “No, I gave fifty.”

Eighteen months later, a man knocked on our door. I didn’t go to him, he came to me. He said, “I would like to buy your property.”

“OK...” He gave me a number.

I said, “Yes!”

It was way more than what I spent on it. We had owned the house eighteen months and we made \$55,000 profit on it. He wanted it for construction and he knew he was going to change the zoning. I didn’t know anything. We made a \$55,000 profit.

But now I have to tell the bad part. I walked into the house and said, “Now that’s what the man of God was talking about!” I know, I know. I had to repent. It was so exciting.

She said, “Wow! \$55,000.” We took that money and we sowed it again. The Lord returned it. I won’t tell all the stories, but He has been returning money to us throughout our thirty-five years of marriage. We have astounding stories together of huge amounts of money that have come our way. It began because my leaders told me to read these books. They told me it could happen. I didn’t know what could happen. I didn’t read it in the Bible, but they told me. Then, after they had told me, I found it in the Bible. I said, “I want this to happen in my life.”

COMMIT YOUR EXPLOITS TO THE LORD

Tithing is essential; it's the beginning place. It's not a law. I'm not saying if you don't tithe, you're evil. I'm saying that it's the beginning point. We began to double tithe from that time forward, from the very first year of our marriage. We only made \$12,000 a year. A thousand dollars a month was our salary. I said, "We'll give twenty percent." We could hardly make it. We had to get help to make it; that's why we were waiting on that \$5,000 return. The Lord kept giving and breaking in. I tell you, it was remarkable.

I'll tell you my first experience. It was the summer and I was eighteen years old. Many of you are eighteen, and I want you to try this. We were leading a bunch of people to the Lord. None of them had Bibles. I said, "I will buy Bibles." I bought 500 paperback Bibles. I was reading this book about doing exploits for God, trusting God, and how, if you do that, He will surprise you. I ordered them. It cost me \$301.24. I'll never forget it. To my knowledge, I had never even had \$300 in my possession up to that time. It was like \$3,000 to me. But I said 'yes.'

A few months, a few weeks went by—I can't remember—and the Bibles came. Some people called me and said, "Your Bibles are coming in tomorrow, Saturday at noon." I had no money. I had essentially already given the Bibles away. I had told these unbelievers and the men who were discipling them, "You can have twenty, you can have fifty, you can have twenty, and we'll take them to this high school and that junior high." I gave them all away. But I hadn't paid for them and had no money.

One person said, "Where are you going to get \$301.24?"

I said, "I don't know." I had this thing, because of the biographies, where I wouldn't tell one person besides my main partner. I said, "Don't tell anyone. We want to see if God hears us."

AN INTERVENTION OF THE GENESIS 1 GOD

The man called and said, "Your Bibles are ready tomorrow, Saturday at noon."

On Saturday morning we awoke. Nothing. I was paralyzed with fear.

Then the strangest thing happened. Someone handed me a check. I won't go into the details. I couldn't believe it; He handed me a check! I opened it up: "Mike Bickle, \$301.25"—one penny more than the exact amount. No one knew the number besides my one partner. This was a completely bizarre, secular situation. It had my name on it.

I went to my partner and he said, "What are we going to do? We have to go down in an hour."

I said, "Look! \$301.24, I got a check for \$301.25. We made a penny. Let's do it!"

It was exciting, but the pressure was intense. That seemed like a huge amount thirty-five years ago. The exciting thing was this: "You, Genesis 1 God; You actually know me. You know I bought those Bibles. I know You're supposed to know, but You really do know. It's way different when You're supposed to know and You really do."

I was so excited. We drove there with kind of a surreal feeling. We picked up the Bibles and handed in the money. I was in a bubble for three days, saying, “He actually knows me. I know that I’m supposed to believe that, but I think He really does!” It was terrifying in a good way. I looked up at the sky and said, “Do You really know what I’m doing? Really, really, really?” I was so excited. That story put so much energy in me. “I’m a man of God”—well, boy of God. “I’m a boy of God, and I’m going for it!”

MIKE PROMISES TO PAY FOR A SKI TRIP

Six months went by. Someone had organized a ski trip, and my ten little junior high kids were coming. It was my senior year. I heard someone from some other school say, “I’m organizing a junior high ski retreat.”

I had never had a ski retreat. I said, “I’ll try it. We’ll have a ski retreat.” I didn’t know how to do one, but I figured it couldn’t be that hard. I announced it to these two brand-new believers, two girls who were fourteen years old from poor families.

“Can we go?” It was \$250 apiece. Again, thirty-five years ago that was a lot of money, more than it is today. They said, “We could never get \$250, never. Our families are on welfare. Not a chance.”

But, I’d had that burst from six months earlier in the incident with the Bibles, so I said, “I’ll pay for it!”

“Where are you going to get that money?”

“I’ll figure it out. I’ll pay for it, girls. Have no fear, the man of God is here.”

GOD INTERVENES WITH MONEY MUSCLE

It was the day of the ski retreat and we were driving out in a van—six, seven, eight of us. I had no money. None. Zero out of \$500. I woke up and the man said, “Anything from heaven yet?”

“No, not yet, but we don’t leave until tonight.”

It was the first time this had ever happened. Again, no one knew the story. I had told the two girls, “Don’t tell anyone. I really don’t want you to tell anyone.” Our big thing was not telling anyone. It had never happened in my life before this. I was eighteen years old.

I got a check in the mail. “Mike Bickle”—“God told me to give you \$250.”

“God told you? I didn’t know God told people stuff. About me?” It was \$250. I had gotten a check in the mail randomly. This blew my mind. This was like the \$300; it was a different situation, but I was so excited. Half way there!

We were packing up at seven o’clock at night. They were at my house. We were leaving at around nine. All six or eight of them were there. We were getting in the van, and I was still \$250 short. I didn’t know what to do, because if we got there and I didn’t have it, it would be embarrassing. I figured I would do dishes; I didn’t know what I would do, but I knew I would do something. I would sell the van. It wasn’t my van anyway; I would just be giving it to the man. Not really, but I was very nervous, and I had no idea what to do. That check in the morning was exciting, but the effect had worn off a little.

Then it was nine hours later, or thereabouts, and an elderly man, a family friend, came over to visit my mom. “Hey, how are you doing?” he asked me. He was about seventy or something, and he was an unbeliever. He said, “Looks like you’re going to have a lot of fun. Where are you going?”

I said, “Colorado ski trip.”

He said, “Good! Have a great time.”

He was in there drinking coffee. He came out a few minutes later and said, “Hey, young man—here.” He gave me \$250.

We were leaving in ten minutes. I was in the car, and I was so excited. “Yes! I’m not going to be embarrassed. That’s true, but more than that. He knows me!” I said, “God, this is real, this time. I know that \$301 was real; but this is double real. How did You know I needed \$500? I know You created the world and all those other things. You’re really smart, but how did You know this?”

GOD ALWAYS COMES THROUGH WHEN HE INSPIRES US

I drove the van for an hour. We were driving ten or twelve hours to Colorado, and I could hardly talk for an hour. I was lost in a conversation with God—not a deep one, but more like, “How did You know?” I couldn’t even talk to the girls. These little high school girls were cracking jokes.

I was thinking, “You know me, You know me, You know me! This is so cool if it’s true. You really know me!”

The answer was, “Yes, but you stepped out of the boat. You believed Me.”

I’m not into people randomly trying risky things. I didn’t know that I had been led by the Lord. I was eighteen years old. No one in my world said, “God told me.” We didn’t have a “God told me” kind of ministry. No one used that phrase.

When I met the charismatics years later and they said, “God told me,” I said, “Whatever.”

We would say, “Gee, it would be neat if I did this...” That’s how we went forward.

I believe you need some kind of inspiration. I don’t really remember. I’m assuming I felt inspired. I don’t know how it worked, but it worked. My point is, I don’t want people to be reckless. I’m not trying to empower people to be reckless.

LIVING FOR THE SAKE OF GIVING

Some years went by. Diane gave the \$5,000, and we got \$55,000. That was so exciting. A number of things happened. Again, I can’t go into all the details. We took that money and we sowed it back. We made a commitment that we were going to live a simple lifestyle.

Look at paragraph D. We were going to live a simple lifestyle to give extravagantly to the kingdom. When I was twenty-two, Diane and I said, “We’ll double tithe.” Here was our commitment. I want to challenge you with this.

We decided we were going to increase the percentage of our giving from ten percent to twenty, from twenty to thirty. We were going to increase the percentage of our giving before we would increase our lifestyle.

We committed; we said, “We’ll reduce our lifestyle before we reduce our giving to the kingdom.” In other words, “We’ll keep giving more, but now we can’t afford a bigger house, we can’t afford a nicer car.” We said, “We’ll reduce our lifestyle before we reduce our giving for the rest of our lives.” We made that decision.

We determined to have a smaller house before we would give smaller amounts away. I didn’t accept then and I don’t accept now the American dream that says I’m supposed to have more while I give less. No! I’m supposed to give more and if I take less, that’s fine. I want this in your DNA. I want you to buy into it in your twenties, because if you wait until your thirties and forties and fifties, my thirty-five years of experience in ministry tell me that if you don’t do it now, it’s very rare that you’ll change your view in your thirties, forties, and fifties. Too many good opportunities come their way. They were always going to do it, but they never followed through. This is the hour of your life to make those critical decisions.

KINGDOM SIMPLICITY: NOT LACKING BUT GIVING

Paragraph E. The verse that God put in my heart was, “Be content with food and clothing” (1 Tim. 6:8, paraphrased). I added, “And air conditioning.” I always did. “Be content with food and covering and air conditioning.” Kingdom simplicity—mark this—isn’t about lacking financially, but about giving extravagantly. In other words, for thirty-five years I’ve had leaders and friends say, “Mike, you have to take more.”

I say, “No, I don’t need to take more.”

We’ve lived in a simple little duplex, I’m guessing, for thirty years. I don’t know the exact amount of time. We live in a duplex now. It’s a debt-free little duplex. We bought it for \$75,000. We’re debt free and I plan to give all my increase, more and more of it, away. I have no intention of increasing my lifestyle, ever. Ever. I’m excited about that. It’s not sacrificial. I want to give a billion dollars to the kingdom and never take a dollar of it for my own personal life.

GOD IS LOOKING TO WHOM HE CAN ENTRUST WEALTH

I’ve had leaders over the years say, “Mike, God wants to bless you.”

I say, “He is; I’m just not keeping it.”

They say, “Well, you don’t understand. God wants to bless you.”

I say, “Oh, He is. I’m getting lots of money.”

They say, “You know what I mean.”

I say, “No, I just don’t want to keep it, and you’re not going to talk me into it.”

I won’t keep it.

I don’t even want it. I want the kingdom to go forth in the earth. I’ve only had a little; maybe some millions over the years—I don’t know how much. It’s not much when you count the need of the earth, but it’s whatever I

have. I'm giving it all away. Maybe not all, that's exaggerated, but I'm going to live simply and I'm going to give more and more away. God is going to bring the wealth of the nations to the Church, to the people of God. He's looking for people to whom He can entrust that wealth, and He's looking for people who won't take it and keep it. Everyone says they'll give it to God, but they only give the overflow to God in a manner that doesn't ever cramp their lifestyle. Many of them call that giving to God, and technically it is, but that's not my vision. I want to give in a spirit of generosity.

Many friends have told me over the years, "You're into poverty."

I say, "No, no, I'm not into poverty. I'm into prosperity and generosity." I give it away in large numbers. I love to give money to the gospel, and I will all my days.

GIVE THE MONEY YOU HAVE, NOT MONEY YOU DON'T HAVE

I've been teaching this over the years. I'll tell you a story. Some years ago, a woman called me on the phone. She said, "I'm in a crisis. I need \$550." This was over twenty years ago, and I was pastoring here in Kansas City. She said, "I need \$550." She told me it was a crisis, and she said, "I need it now."

I said, "OK, I can help you." I took out my MasterCard, and I've never done this before or since. I don't recommend giving on credit; that's not the way. Give money you have, not money you don't have. But this one time, I put my MasterCard out and I just did it. I gave her \$550. Again, I don't recommend that. I've never done that since and I don't teach that; but I had \$550 and I gave it to her.

A week or so later, I was at the church service. I was right there worshiping. A man came up to me on the front row and said, "Mike, I hate to interrupt you. I know you're getting ready to minister. God told me to give you \$550. I know it's weird."

I said, "No, it's not; it's great."

He had it rolled up with a rubber band. "There's \$550. Sorry!"

I said, "No need to apologize..."

That was so cool. I gave the lady \$550, and I got it back. By this time I have a number of stories. I probably have thirty or forty stories. I'm never one hundred percent sure it will always work out well, but I have a whole lot more confidence after my experiences over the years. Sometimes it doesn't work like I think it will, and I leave that to the Lord because so many times He answers in such profound ways. Not always; I don't want to give a false story.

MIKE AND THE CIRCULATING MONEY

I put the \$550 in my pocket. It was rolled up; I hadn't counted it. I said, "Lord, I love You. You're so fun to serve! It's just so fun to be close to You. Thank You. I love You. You love me. We have a really good thing going, forever. This is going to work out really well. For real!"

We had a ministry time. During the worship, the worship leaders called a ministry time. I went up and prayed for a man. He said, "I'm just in great need."

I said, “What’s that?”

He said, “Something happened and we need \$550 tonight.”

I said, “Really?”

“Yes, not a chance.”

I took the \$550 and said, “Here’s \$550.”

We were in the worship area; it was ministry time and we were laying hands on the sick. He said, “Do you always carry \$550 rolled up in a rubber band?”

I said, “Just when I need to.”

He said, “Really?”

I said, “Yes.”

The meeting was over. Right as I was walking out the door, some guy ran up to me. “Mike, stop!” We were the very last ones out of the meeting. The building was empty. He had been cleaning up the children’s ministry and he was the last one out. I was locking the door. He said, “This is weird. We have an old car and we sold it. The Lord told us to give you the money. Here’s \$550.” He handed it to me.

I said, “God, You won’t let this thing go, will You?” I drove home and said, “This is so cool!” Again, don’t give people money on your MasterCard if you don’t have the money. That was weird. The man gave it to me in the worship; I gave it away, and at the end of the meeting it came round again. Now it was even, but I was excited and I had a story in my heart. My personal history in God was building in the realm of money.

“YOU CAN’T AFFORD NOT TO TITHE”

Some time went by and I was talking to a lady on the phone. I was a pastor, and one of the ladies in the church was crying.

“What’s wrong?” I asked her.

She said, “I need \$2,000. There’s a big deal going on.”

I said, “You need \$2,000?”

She said, “By five o’clock today.”

It was maybe eleven o’clock in the morning.

I said, “I’ll pray with you. The Lord has used me in faith in the realm of money. I’ll pray with you. I won’t tell you my stories, but I believe this: He listens. Not to me in a special way, but He listens to anyone who will believe Him. He will listen to them in this thing. Here is what I want to ask you: do you tithe?”

She said, “No, are you kidding? I can’t afford to tithe.”

I said, “You can’t afford not to tithe. I would tithe immediately and get my way to double tithing as soon as you can. Position yourself to release the miracle-working power of God in the realm of money.”

She said, “What on earth are you talking about?”

I said, “It’s a huge reality.”

She said, “Tithe ten percent every week? That’s intense.”

I said, “No, it’s not intense; it’s the Genesis 1 God. He’s really smart and He has a lot of money. You’re in good hands. Don’t worry. He has way more money than you need and He really likes you and He’s really smart. That’s not a big risk.”

She said, “Yes, but He’s invisible.”

“Yes, but He does a lot of things.”

She said, “I don’t know...”

I said, “I’m not going to be mean; I’m only going to pray for you. I don’t mean to be mean. This might offend you.” I said, “You can pray yourself, but I feel wrong about it. I feel like I’m lying to you. You have to obey God in your money. I don’t mean some sacrificial obedience. You have to believe that the invisible God is watching you and loves you and that He wants to be a part of your money life; not just the other parts of your life.”

I talked for a few minutes. She said, “OK. I’ll do it.”

I said, “No, think about it.”

She said, “No, I will.”

I said, “OK, I’ll pray with you then. I will stand with you, for real. That means more than you think, meaning, I’m really going to engage with you.” What I meant was, I wasn’t going to rest until I got this money for her. I didn’t say that, but I meant I was really going to help her if she was going to obey God. I knew that for the next thirty to forty years of her life, this would change her whole life.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT

I hung the phone up. A few minutes went by. A man knocked on the door. He was with his wife. They were a young couple, and were leaders in business.

He said, “I’ve been at your church the last two or three Sundays.”

I said, “OK, cool. Come on in. What’s your name?”

He told me his name and said, “We’re just in the area and were thinking about leaving our old church and joining this one. We just want to say, “Hi.”

I said, “Good. My name is Mike. I’ve been here. Tell me about yourself.”

“We lead a business. We’re in a church that doesn’t believe in the gifts of the Spirit or the power of God.”

I said, “OK.”

The wife interrupted and said, “Mike, we hear you pray for people, and that you pray for healings and there are prophecies. Is this really true?”

I said, “Yes. It doesn’t always work, but yes. We do that stuff.”

She said, “My husband has nightmares.”

He looked at her and said, “I’m trying to meet the man who might be our new pastor.”

She said, “Will you pray for him?”

He looked at her, and he was annoyed. “We just came to say “Hi...”

I asked him, “Do you have nightmares?”

He said, “Yes.”

I said, “I’ll pray for a minute. Do you want me to pray?” He said, “Yes, what am I going to say, “No?””

He sat down and I said, “Lord, in the name of Jesus I take authority over this tormenting spirit.” I hadn’t heard from God that it was a tormenting spirit, but it all added up. I said, “In the name of Jesus, I take authority over this spirit.”

“YOU HAVE BEEN FEEDING YOUR DEMON FOR QUITE A WHILE”

The man started coughing and choking. His eyes were doing funny things. His wife said, “Honey, what’s wrong? Are you OK?”

I said, “He’s OK.”

She said, “What’s happening?” Her husband was coughing.

I said, “You’re going to like him a lot better when I send him back to you. It’s going to be way better for you.”

She said, “I’m sorry. Are you OK?”

I said, “Shh.” We took a few minutes.

Then he said, “What was that?”

I said, “A demon came out of you. We’ll talk about that later.”

He said, “A demon? Are they real?”

I said, “Yes, you have been feeding your pet demon pretty healthily for quite a while. Your pet demon is gone. You have to quit feeding him, because otherwise he’s going to come back.” Demons are expensive to get, really expensive to maintain, and really expensive to get rid of. Demons are really expensive. You don’t want to go there. Turn off the pornography; say no to the drunkenness and the drugs. You don’t want to feed a demon. It costs a lot to get them, it costs a lot to maintain them, and it costs a lot to make them leave. They don’t go away because you want them to leave.

That was a little side note; that was for free.

“COME OVER, I GOT YOUR CHECK”

The man was so excited. He said, “I feel great! What happened?”

I said, “What happened? Let’s talk about it later.”

He said, “You know what? I’m so thankful.” He wrote a check for \$2,000.

The lady had told me over the phone two or three hours earlier, “I need \$2,000. I’ll tithe.”

He was going to put our church’s name on the check. He said, “No, I don’t even want the tax credit. I want this to be totally for God and I want nothing back. Put any name on that check you want.”

He left. I called the lady. It was four o’clock, and she needed it by five. I said, “Hey, how are you doing on that commitment to tithe?”

She said, “I’m committed. I don’t care what it costs me, I’m going to obey God.”

I said, “Come over, I got your check.” I wrote her name on it and gave her a \$2,000 check that day.

HE WANTS TO INTERVENE ON HIS TERMS

One more story. I can just go on and on. No, I’ll tell you two or three. I’ll make them short. A woman called our church, a single mom. She said, “Mike, my car broke down. I don’t make very much money. Please help, please help.”

She was a good friend. I asked, “Do you tithe?”

She said, “I can’t afford it.”

I said, “You can’t afford not to tithe.”

She said, “I know...”

I said, “No, you don’t. This is real. God is not a joke. He really wants to intervene in your life, but on His terms, not on yours. Those are the terms. He says you have to step out a little, and ten percent is the beginning of the stepping out.” Don’t stay at ten percent. Go way beyond that. That’s the beginning for everyone. He has so much to give, but He gives it on His terms.

She said, “I can’t afford it. But OK, I will.”

She stayed home that night, but I went to the church service. She was so burdened. Her car had broken down and she couldn’t go to work the next day. She was going to lose her job. She had one more warning. She was crying. A lady came up to me and said, “Mike, may I talk to you before you leave?”

I said, “Yes.”

She said, “I have a car. I’ve notarized the title; put any name on it you want. Here, it’s yours. The car is in the parking lot. Take it. Put any name on it, the title is here.”

I drove home and said, “Lord, this is so cool!” I called the lady up and said, “Friend, in the last five or six hours, have you been praying about it?”

She said, “I will tithe. I don’t care what it costs me, I will.”

I wasn’t going to give her the car; I really wasn’t. I wanted her to step out of the boat, but I said, “Guess what? I have a car title and keys.”

It wasn’t a great car; worth about \$10,000 in today’s market. Not great, but good; better than the one she had that had broken down. She came over and said, “I have a title of a car that’s notarized? It’s in my name and I have the keys? That happened in five hours without you telling anyone? How did that happen?”

I said, “He knows us. It’s outrageous, but He does. He knows us. It’s outrageous. It’s awesome!”

COMMITTING TO A SIMPLE LIFESTYLE

I didn’t do this all the time, but in our twenties and thirties we made about \$1,000 every two weeks—\$500 a week. We could live simply with that; but we had no money at the end of the month. I’m not against having money at the end of the month. I’m not against saving it, either, but the Lord wanted me to go way out. He wanted me to push it. There are others who push it more than I do; I’m not saying I’m the premiere example. I have a long history. There are others who have more history than I have. I want to say that. I want to push it, at least in terms of the simple lifestyle here in America. It’s weird in America to commit to a simple lifestyle instead of praying and fasting to get out of one. I’m committed to it until the end because I want a really big pad

in the age to come, for real, and I'll invite you over! It may take me a few hundred years to get all of you, but I'll invite you over.

This didn't always happen, but I would take the \$1,000, and even though we had no money at the end of the month, I would feel stirred. I would go to Diane, and I would always get her permission. I would say, "I feel stirred. Let's just give it away and sow it into missions." Again, I only did that a number of times—maybe two, three, four, or five times. Certainly not a hundred. We gave everything away. We had no money to pay our bills at the end of that month. "Are you in with me?" By now we have a lot of stories together. I said, "I feel a stirring." So, we gave it away.

One time after I had done that—I'm talking a day or two later—a man called me on the phone from the north side of Kansas City. He said, "The Lord told me to drive down and give you \$1,000 today. I know that's weird, but there it is."

I said, "Yes!" It was a break-even deal, but it's exciting that He knew me.

A year or two later, I did it again. I had the same salary, \$1,000, and I gave it away. A man from Oklahoma sent us a check. He said, "The Lord told me to give you \$2,000. I've never met you; He just told me to give it you."

I said, "Unbelievable." It's not unbelievable. That's how it works.

INCLUDING THEIR SONS IN HIS PROVISION

One more funny story. We would have family devotions. My two sons, Luke and Paul, are thirty and thirty-two now. They were little guys at the time, eight, nine or ten. We would tell them these stories. Dads, moms, whenever I got a thousand-dollar check, I would give money to God, but I would always give ten percent to my boys, even when they were eight, nine, and ten. They would say, "Whoa! A hundred bucks? Oh, my!"

When I got that \$2,000 check, I would give them \$200. It blew their minds. I wanted them to be a part of the story line. They said, "Whoa, Dad is talking to God again and it's working! Money is coming. How does he give us this money?" It was exciting in their little nine-, ten-, and twelve-year-old minds.

LUKE BICKLE GETS TO TRAVEL FIRST CLASS

My son Luke had a small amount of money saved up because he had been getting these little deposits. This need came up and he decided, "Dad, I want to give my money to it. I want to get my own story. I want to give it away."

He gave it away. The next day, in our family devotion, I said, "Luke, I want you to ask for something. You're giving money away."

He said, "I don't want anything."

"That's a good answer, but I'm talking about your heart being blown away."

He said, "I don't care; I don't want anything."

I said, “I know, but just between God and you; He wants to ‘wow’ you.” We had been traveling a bit with John Wimber at that time, so I brought my family with me. John would pay the way.

Luke said, “OK.” He was ten, eleven, or twelve. He said, “I’ll pray that when we travel, something cool will happen.” That was good enough: “Something cool will happen.” I didn’t know what that meant, but God was smart and He could figure it out.

“Lord, Luke has given money. Make something cool happen while we’re traveling.” A week later, we received a notice in the mail from one of the major airlines. I couldn’t believe it: “Luke Bickle, you have now earned your Gold Card. You will have full upgrades on all your flights.”

It’s impossible! You have to go 100,000 miles for that! I didn’t want to blow the miracle, but I told Luke, “This is weird. This can’t be.”

He said, “You said to ask and it happened. Cool!” To him, the upgrades were the really expensive chocolates, free cokes, good desserts. He could see those people up there with the big fancy chocolates and say, “Whoa, that would be awesome.” There were movies and everything. We’re talking about in the 1980s and 1990s, so they didn’t have movies in the same way.

“I’M TOUCHING HIM IN THE LANGUAGE OF HIS LITTLE HEART”

I called the airline and said, “Sir, I’m just checking.” I didn’t want to blow the miracle.

The man said, “There are so many people involved in this; it’s more complicated to undo it. Just take it.”

So three of us—Diane, our son Paul, and I—traveled in coach. Our son Luke was up there, eleven years old in first class with his feet up on the seat: “Ma’am, bring me another chocolate.” He had chocolate all over his mouth, ice cream, movies, Cokes...

I said, “Lord, what is this?”

He said, “I’m touching him in the language of his little heart.”

Diane, come on up here. Let’s take maybe another five minutes, and then we need to quit. Let’s go to the \$5,000 one, and any other comments you want to make. I really didn’t make you do that.

DIANE BICKLE:

No, he scared me into the reality that God really was, really real. When he told me some stories of how God has provided for him...

MIKE BICKLE:

Wait a second; I want the camera really big. She is so cute. I want the camera gigantic. I want everyone to see what I see. Wait, you’re the head usher. I like it. I see her out there running around. I had said, “What are you doing?” She said, “I want to be the head usher.”

DIANE BICKLE:

“I said I wanted to be head usher right in the front so that I can see all you guys.” Anyway, I didn’t have any stories of God’s faithfulness in my life because I was a new believer. I didn’t know that God was that intimate and that personal and that involved in our lives. All I knew was that a responsible person saved their money, because my dad drilled it into me.

MIKE BICKLE:

Save, save, save. He didn’t read biographies!

DIANE BICKLE:

No. I wanted to be responsible. When Mike shared the philosophy of giving and said that God would see it and come back and respond to you, it was a new concept to me. I was willing to try it out, and I made him swear to me that he wouldn’t tell my dad. “Let’s do this. Don’t tell my dad!”

MIKE BICKLE:

I said, “How about when we got the answer?”

DIANE BICKLE:

That began my journey into a true adventure, and it was so exciting to me. Again, I was sheepish at first. I sort of timidly said, “OK, let’s try that.”

MIKE BICKLE:

Five thousand dollars isn’t that sheepish for your first time. Then we committed to double tithing the next month after we got married, and you said, “Let’s do it!”

DIANE BICKLE:

Then it escalated. Then I understood that God is my provider financially. He’s proven Himself to me again and again and again. Then I realized, “Oh, wow, this applies to my stuff, too”—not just to my money—it applies to all my stuff, all the things I’m so protective over: my new pots and pans that I got as a new bride, and my new couches that disappeared out of our living room when one of our tenants moved out.

MIKE BICKLE:

I picked up a man off the street and led him to the Lord. Then he stayed in our house. He took the couch with him one day when we went to church. How was I supposed to know he would take the couch?

DIANE BICKLE:

So, I got to learn another lesson: this concept of giving, and giving from a cheerful heart, applies to my stuff and not just my money. It applies to every earthly possession that I have. I have to say that, thirty-three years later, I don’t miss any pots and pans or couches or cars. We’ve had cars get taken and given to us; we’ve had property taken and given to us; and we’ve had furniture taken and given to us. It has been such a joyful journey, and one that I’ve so enjoyed.

Even my sons have grown up and come into this understanding themselves. They’re both givers: they both have a heart for the poor and the underprivileged. I want to say to you parents that any time you have an opportunity to put your children in front of the poorer class of people, send them on those short-term missions trips when

they're in junior high and high school. Let them see how someone who isn't American lives their life, and then let the Lord pull on their hearts. There's a verse Mike had in the notes about living with a mindset that our abundance would make up for their lack, and their abundance would feed into our lack (2 Cor. 8:14).

I had the opportunity to go to Haiti in February after the earthquake. I stood in front of a sea of about 5,000 Haitians in a worship service. They were standing in a dirt gully because their church had been flattened by the earthquake. Twenty-five of their Bible students had lost their lives in the Bible school. I looked across this sea of people, and they were worshiping the Lord with all their might. I was close enough, so I could see big tears rolling down some of their faces. The pastor stood next to me and told me the story of some of the people in front of me. He said, "See that lady in the purple dress? She lost her husband, her house, and her oldest son. Do you see that man over there in the red shirt? He lost twenty-one people in his family. He's been drunk for the last seven days. We're just glad to see him here this morning. You see that person over there?" He did this three or four times, and I was weeping. I said, "You have to stop; I can't even take this in." I stood there in front of this sea of people who were worshiping the Lord with their whole hearts, most of whom had lost all their earthly possessions, which would be about that high in comparison to ours. They had lost it all, along with their loved ones, and they were telling Jesus by their worship, "I love You, I trust You, I give You my life."

I said, "Lord, I would that I could stand in my hour of shaking half as strong in my faith as these people are who are standing before me." It so moved my heart. I wanted to empty out my bank account, but I had to get hold of Mike first because he wasn't with me. I highly encourage you, husbands and wives; get on the same page when it comes to giving. It's really important that you do that. It's not that you give to every need, because there are many, many needs out there. The Lord does direct your heart, and He does lead you in the correct way of giving when it comes to the "Who?" and the "When?" and the "How much?" He's delighted to reveal that to your hearts and to help us as husbands and wives to get in sync and on the same page.

MIKE BICKLE:

Here are a few really quick questions. You gave the \$5,000. When the \$55,000 came eighteen months later, how did you feel?

DIANE BICKLE:

I was walking around like this. I was so amazed, my jaw was hanging open, and I said, "Wow, this God is so real and so personal, and so generous—so amazingly generous." That's who God is. He's so generous to us.

MIKE BICKLE:

Who else gives one thousand percent interest?

DIANE BICKLE:

No one. There's no investment you can make in this lifetime that will give those kinds of returns.

MIKE BICKLE:

Some banks give five percent return interest; maybe someone gives fifteen percent, but who gives a thousand percent interest? He's so rich. One more thing. I haven't talked to you about this in years. When Luke got the Gold Card, how did you feel about that? I know you were excited.

DIANE BICKLE:

It was very exciting. It was so fun. His faith just catapulted forward. We just loved it. He was being a little bratty up there in first class with us sitting back in coach. He did invite me up to eat his shrimp cocktail, because he didn't like shrimp cocktail. I got to go up and eat his shrimp cocktail. Then he sent me back to coach.

SHELLEY HUNDLEY:

That was so good. I just got touched again. I just want to say this to some of you who are out there as ministers or missionaries, and you're saying, "I don't make that much." The Lord touched my heart on this four years ago. Even in the midst of living a simplified lifestyle as a missionary, the Lord said, "Shelley, I want you to be able to have the faith to give extravagantly—even in the midst of that." Our IHOP-KC leadership team is backstage right now. I'm springing this on you here, but our leadership has been back there and three or four of us were touched by the Lord even as you were sharing. We want to give you all a chance to respond right now. We'll take an offering up right now. We want to give you a chance to respond right now before the Lord, even this afternoon in your heart, as you give.

MIKE BICKLE:

How about we don't take one tonight and we just take one right now?

SHELLEY HUNDLEY:

Good idea. Here's the thing: what I've learned over the years, and seen in my own life, is that there's a moment when the Lord is speaking to you. In that moment when the Lord is touching you and you're stirred in your faith, that's the moment to make the move. Step out in that place in obedience, and don't let the moment go by. It's not a pressure thing; it's giving you an opportunity to respond. I want to call the ushers forward at this time. We've scrambled and gotten ready.

MIKE BICKLE:

You guys are all back there and you want to change it and do it right now. We're taking an offering for the conference expenses right now. We can do two?

SHELLEY HUNDLEY:

I'm putting it down right now and saying, "Do it right now." Daniel Lim and Allen Hood and Sarah Sun Kim and Brian Kim are back there. Everyone is saying, "We have to respond." I'm going to go back and do my own offering on the Internet website when I go back as well.

MIKE BICKLE:

OK, we'll do it right now.

MINISTRY TIME

Here is what I really care about, more than you responding at this moment by giving—although we'll go ahead and take the conference offering right now instead of tonight—I want to invite you all to stand right now for a moment. I'm concerned that you would talk to God like those ladies did who were in need, and that you would make a commitment: "Ten percent of my money is my beginning point." Then, some of you are going to go the next step: "Lord, I can't do it yet, but soon, I want to grow to twenty percent." Then, some of you are going to say what Diane and I said. The Lord promised He would give us, literally, a billion dollars. I know it's a true

promise. Now it doesn't matter whether the Lord gives you millions or hundreds of millions. The Lord is speaking to some of you, so that you'll say of that extreme increase, "I'll give it all to You if you give it to me."

Those are three commitments. This is basic Christianity. I want to pray first before we talk about the offering. Some of you are saying, "I'll do the ten percent, the beginning point"—in your ministry back home.

Number two: "I'm a young person"—maybe newly married—and you're saying, "We'll do what Mike and Diane did. We'll start now; we'll get into that twenty percent dimension of sowing into the kingdom." Wherever God tells you to sow back home, and you're saying, "We're getting into this. We'll get power encounters." I tell you, it will test you; but ten, twenty, thirty years later, you'll have so many stories if you stick with it.

Thirdly, if God gives you those big numbers, it's all His. You're not giving Him ninety percent; you're giving Him all the big stuff. You're giving Him the hundred percent. I made a commitment: I won't take one dollar for a cup of coffee for this increase. Here's the exciting thing: I can see a few things happening right now in the natural—not by faith, but in the natural. It's real. There's huge increase coming to the prayer movement. In my little world, I can see it. Huge amounts are headed this way, and I promised the Lord years ago I would never take one dollar of it.

I want to pray for a minute, and then we'll shift over and talk about the conference for two minutes and let you respond to that. I want you to pray and talk to the Lord for a moment right here. "Father, I say yes to You." One group of you says, "Yes, I will start with ten percent. I will sow a seed. I will start." I don't care if you sow the seed here or wait until you get back home; you're going to give it to the kingdom—not just to a friend in need who will applaud you and think you're the greatest thing ever. Give it to the kingdom in such a way that they don't even know it's you.

The next group says, "Lord, we'll give twenty percent. We're a newly-married couple, or going to be married in the next five years. We'll do that; we're going for it. It may take us a while to get there, but we're going for it."

Beloved, we only made \$12,000 a year, \$1,000 a month, and giving away twenty percent really cut into us when we did that. I said, "I can't live with giving away less than that. I will not."