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## **Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University: FPU's Effect on Tithes and Offerings in the Evangelical Church**

Jay Forseth

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

DAVE RAMSEY'S FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY:  
FPU'S EFFECT ON TITHES AND OFFERINGS IN THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
JAY FORSETH

PORTLAND, OREGON

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Portland Seminary  
George Fox University  
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on February 19, 2020  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Global Perspectives

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Unless otherwise noted, scripture references are from Zondervan's New  
International Version (NIV), 2008.

## DEDICATION

Lisa Forseth, you have been the best thing to happen to me this side of heaven. After my salvation in Jesus, you have been and always will be my greatest gift from God. I love you and need you. Thank you for being a wonderful supporter for me on this doctoral journey and a dynamite proofreader. Much greater than simply my spouse, you are my best friend. I appreciate your encouragement on this adventure, my honey. God gave me you.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the generosity of my earthly brother and true lifelong friend, Ron Forseth. Your help has been overwhelming in the best of ways, and I am grateful daily for your support. Thank you, Ron. You are my BROTHER.

My parents always stressed the importance of having a good education. This project is my attempt to live out for them the lifelong love of learning they graciously instilled in all of their seven kids. Although my mom is already in heaven with Jesus, I hope this would have made her proud. In many ways I feel my dad's pleasure in successfully walking this winding road of doctoral work. When someone calls me Doctor Jay, may my father feel, in appreciation, a success for our whole family.

To my fellow LGP8 Cohort members at Portland Seminary at George Fox University, I count you as more than colleagues. What a blessing you have been, both personally and professionally. Thank you for your patience in teaching me—as iron sharpens iron.

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My advisor, Dr. Darrell Peregrym, has been an amazing blessing. It was not an accident that we were paired together. I am grateful to God for your guidance and pastor's heart.

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The team at Portland Seminary at George Fox University has been supportive and encouraging beyond words. I recognize and appreciate your compassionate expertise.

Rochelle Deans from George Fox University came highly recommended as an editor. I can see why. She has been spectacularly precise and skilled. I believe she is the best editor I could have ever hoped for.

The crew at Ramsey Solutions, up to Dave Ramsey himself, has been incredibly generous with their time and counsel during this process. May God bless your ministry. Many thanks and much deserved credit goes to the hard-working team at Ramsey's headquarters for their cooperation in assisting with this research paper. My gratitude to Angela Schatz (Public Relations Assistant), Joshua Collier (former Stewardship Advisor and current Associate Director), Sean Bess (Stewardship Advisor), Tony Leonis (Church Research Division), Dyllan Wilson (Stewardship Support), Brent Spicer (Director of Strategic Relationships), Ken Shafer (Church-Wide Stewardship Specialist), Nathan Purdy (Stewardship Support), and Jeff Martinez (Associate Director of Momentum and Financial Peace).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board of Kingdom Resource Ministries (KRM) of The Evangelical Church facilitated the teaching of Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University (FPU) at 42 local churches across the denomination between 2014 and 2018. At the same time, stewardship seminars were offered, while parallel stewardship sermons were preached. Over \$50,000 in denominational funds were spent reaching over 20,000 church attenders, with nearly 2,000 FPU participants. Each local church also invested over \$1,000 to support FPU. The stated goal of the KRM Board was to assist our local churches in teaching biblical stewardship principles to their communities.

However, lead pastors in The Evangelical Church questioned if FPU and Dave Ramsey's "7 Baby Steps" develop faithful stewards who are more generous toward the ministries of their local church. Ramsey Solutions claims giving of graduates increases dramatically after FPU, doubling from giving less than 4% of overall income before the class, to giving 8% after.<sup>1</sup> This "doubling" of giving was our expectation, but our results didn't match this prospect.

The stated definition of stewardship in The Evangelical Church involves encouraging the followers of Jesus to be found faithful managing everything God has trusted them with, including their time, talents, and treasures.<sup>2</sup> A measurable part of

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Fact Sheet," DaveRamsey.com, January 1, 2018, <https://www.daveramsey.com/pr/fact-sheet>. Most recent fact sheet, updated annually. Higher numbers will be reflected on new fact sheets annually.

<sup>2</sup> Larry Burkett, *The Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 23.

stewardship, as it relates to our local churches, is when faithful Christians follow through by the sharing of their tithes and offerings.

Biblical foundations of stewardship include: Psalm 24:1 – “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it”; 1 Corinthians 4:2 – “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful”; Malachi 3:8,10 – “How are we robbing you? In tithes and offerings...Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse”; and 2 Corinthians 9:7 – “Each of you should give what you have decided in your own heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” There are over 2,400 verses on stewardship in the Bible.<sup>3</sup>

Data collected from our 42 Evangelical Churches indicates FPU graduates initially may NOT be more generous toward their local church, but probably will two to four years later, but not necessarily at the level of the hopes of our pastors, implied by Ramsey’s claim of graduates doubling their charitable giving.

Almost 5 million people have taken FPU in its 25-year history. Over 40,000 churches have hosted the nine-week course.<sup>4</sup> Graduates of FPU averaged \$5,300 of debt erased and \$2,700 of savings banked in the first 90 days after starting the class. Supplementing FPU is the popular Dave Ramsey Show, hosting 13 million radio and digital listeners on 600 radio stations, now the third-most syndicated show in the United States, behind Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity.<sup>5</sup> Seven Dave Ramsey books have

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<sup>3</sup> Larry Burkett, *Dollars and Sense: What the Bible Says about You and Your Money* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1993), inside cover.

<sup>4</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Fact Sheet.” To gain further understanding of the framework of FPU, refer to the “Financial Peace University Supporting Materials” in Appendix A.

<sup>5</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Fact Sheet.”



become best-sellers, including *Financial Peace* and *The Total Money Makeover*.<sup>6</sup> The basic principles of FPU are centered around Dave Ramsey's 7 Baby Steps, outlined as follows:<sup>7</sup>

**Baby Step 1:** \$1,000 cash in a beginner emergency fund

**Baby Step 2:** Use the debt snowball to pay off all your debt but the house

**Baby Step 3:** A fully funded emergency fund of 3 to 6 months of expenses

**Baby Step 4:** Invest 15% of your household income into retirement

**Baby Step 5:** Start saving for college

**Baby Step 6:** Pay off your home early

**Baby Step 7:** Build wealth and give generously

Evangelical Church pastors wonder if graduates focus on debt reduction immediately after graduating from FPU as opposed to following the biblical mandate to share generously with their local church, especially since Ramsey waits until the final Baby Step to highlight giving.

Many pastors in our denomination support a 10% tithe on the increase of one's earning, with the understanding of it being a "firstfruit"<sup>8</sup> given to the "storehouse"<sup>9</sup> of the local church, while returning to God that which is already His. A vast majority of Christians do not tithe<sup>10</sup> and over a third of church attenders have a giving record of zero.<sup>11</sup> The average Christian gives away somewhere between 2% and 4% of their

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<sup>6</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Fact Sheet."

<sup>7</sup> Dave Ramsey, *Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University Member Workbook* (Nashville: Lampo Licensing, LLC, 2012), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Proverbs 3:9-10.

<sup>9</sup> Nehemiah 10:35.

<sup>10</sup> George Barna, "American Donor Trends," Barna Group, June 3, 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trends/>.

<sup>11</sup> Jason Firch, "2018 Online Giving Statistics, Trends & Data: The Ultimate List of Giving Stats," Nonprofits Source, 2019, <https://nonprofitssource.com/online-giving-statistics/>.

income, far below a full 10% tithe, and remarkably very similar to non-believers' giving habits.<sup>12</sup>

There was a stated desire among KRM leaders in our Denomination to gauge the effectiveness of FPU, especially with the achievement of the “7 Baby Steps”, culminating with the generosity of our congregants towards their local churches. Unfortunately, very little outside data exists apart from the stated claims of Ramsey’s own research division.

In short, the KRM Board in The Evangelical Church endorses Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University for use in our stewardship program, as it has achieved positive results and facilitated healthy discipleship of Christian stewardship, including increased giving towards the ministries of our local churches.

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<sup>12</sup> Giving USA, *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2014* (Chicago: Giving USA Foundation, 2015).

## ABSTRACT

In The Evangelical Church, giving actually went *down* after FPU in 23 out of our 42 churches (55%) the year the class was held. Nevertheless, our overall average increase in giving to the 42 churches was +2.39% the same year. The following year, giving further increased a total of 4.24% over the year before the class was taught, which supports Ramsey's claim of a 4% giving increase. In year three after the class, total giving reached a remarkable increase of 7.06%, while 67% of our churches saw a positive net increase in giving after hosting FPU.

However, in the fourth year, giving dramatically *fell* to only a 2.04% increase over the year prior to the class start, a .35% decrease from even the first year. Sustainability questions arose from our pastors regarding giving habits after FPU.

It was determined to maintain our positive giving results, three strategies would need to be implemented: reinforcement, frequency, and saturation. In addition, improved communication was necessary in order not to place pastors' expectations needlessly high.

Teaching FPU one additional time per church, preaching on stewardship at least yearly, and saturating the church with 5 to 20% of FPU attenders greatly increased giving in our denomination (by 11.6%), impacting local church budgets considerably.

Ramsey's team proposed the completion of a program called *Momentum*, which strives to achieve 80% saturation of attenders who have participated in FPU. This program effectively morphs the giving *culture* of a church, by the "Momentum Theorem" of "Focused intensity over time, multiplied by God, equals unstoppable momentum."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum," *A Church Wide Stewardship Movement*, accessed March 28, 2018, <http://www.daveramsey.com/churchwide/>, 7.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEC	Columbus Evangelical Church (Columbus, MT)
ECFA	Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability
FPU	Financial Peace University
GAO	Government Accounting Office
GWA	Global Wesleyan Alliance
KRM	Kingdom Resource Ministries
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
NBER	National Bureau of Economic Research
NEFE	National Endowment for Financial Education
NIV	New International Version
NPO	Need, Problem, Opportunity
NRB	National Religious Broadcasters
S&P	Standard and Poor 500

## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS FOR PURPOSES OF THIS PROJECT

**Biblical Stewardship** – The responsibility to be found faithful as temporary managers (stewards) of everything God entrusted us with, including our time, talents, and treasures, according to the late Larry Burkett’s broad definition.

**Contentment** – According to King Solomon, being satisfied with one’s possessions and station in life. The opposite of contentment is acquiring more and more, never satisfied, to the point of an unhealthy preoccupation and a form of idolatry.

**Discipleship** – The process of assisting a believer to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Believers grow in Christian maturity, being transformed more into the image of Jesus Christ.

**Firstfruit** – Tithes are not to be a leftover, but the very best, from the first of all God has provided.

**Frequency** – The number of times something happens within a particular period, or the fact of something happening often or reinforced a large number of times, which aids in retention of learning.

**Generosity** – Synonymous, in The Evangelical Church in this stewardship context, with similar words like giving, sharing, tithing, offering, and donating.

**Offerings** – Restricted and designated gifts to missions, building funds, food banks, pregnancy centers, etc.

**Proportional Giving** – Regular and systematic giving directly related to a portion of one’s income, where “sacrificial giving” is encouraged. Not the same for every person.



**Reinforcement** – In behavioral psychology, reinforcement is applying a stimulus that will strengthen a person's future behavior, and includes both positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement.

**Saturation** – a measure of the extent of a product's sales volume relative to the number of total potential customers, expressed as a percentage.

**Steward** – One to whom care has been entrusted, a temporary manager.

**Storehouse** – Tithes are to be given to the place where one is fed spiritually. In Old Testament times, it was the temple, tent, and tabernacle. In New Testament times, it is the local church, where one practices all the "one another" scriptures.

**S&P 500** – A stock market index that measures the performance of 500 large companies listed on stock exchanges in the United States. It is one of the most commonly followed indexes, considered by many to be one of the best representations of average return rates.

**Tithes** – From stewardship seminars of The Evangelical Church, 10% of the increase of our income, an undesignated and non-restricted gift with no strings on spending attached.

## THESIS STATEMENT

**Topic:** Dave Ramsey's "Financial Peace University" (FPU) has not met expectations of some local pastors in The Evangelical Church for increasing tithes and offerings.

**Problem (NPO):** Pastors question if Dave Ramsey's "7 Baby Steps" develop faithful stewards who are more generous toward the ministries of their local Evangelical Church.

**Research Question:** In what ways does Dave Ramsey's FPU assist local Evangelical Churches in discipling faithful stewards who are more generous with tithes and offerings?

**Claim/Thesis:** Data collected from 42 Evangelical Churches indicates FPU graduates may NOT be more generous toward their local church, for up to 3 years.

**Intended Outcome:** Expectations of our local Evangelical Church pastors will be better matched with recent data regarding FPU graduate's generosity through tithes and offerings.

**Major Lines of Argumentation:** Based upon data from 42 Evangelical Churches

- Initially, giving of tithes and offerings may go down after the class, due to graduates urgently focusing on eliminating personal debt through the "7 Baby Steps."
- It may take up to 3 years for giving to the local church to increase, since generosity is not encouraged in the "Baby Steps" until the final step 7.
- The biblical principle of storehouse-firstfruit tithing is being lost when discipling younger generations. Some believe this is an Old Testament

concept and not applicable for today's Christians, although Jesus talked about tithing in Matthew.

- Solutions, based on recommendations from Ramsey Solutions, include teaching FPU more frequently, repeating stewardship principles in sermons annually, and saturating the local church body with biblical stewardship principles and practices.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Ramsey states graduates of FPU double the percentage of the income they give after successfully completing the class, but he does not specify to which causes.
- Concession: Generosity is still important to FPU graduates, but they are receiving more requests than ever from multiple outside sources for donations, which divides the pool.
- Concession: Perhaps pastors' expectations of an increase in general offerings are unrealistic.
- Measurable data from 42 churches in The Evangelical Church where FPU was facilitated reflects potential suggestions and solutions for increasing generosity toward the local church which would better meet the expectations of local church pastors.

## CHAPTER 1:

### DESCRIPTION OF THE NEED/PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

*16 And he told them this parable “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest.*

*17 He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’*

*18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain.*

*19 And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’*

*20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’*

*21 “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”*

### **Luke 12:16-21**

The Board of Kingdom Resource Ministries (KRM) of The Evangelical Church<sup>1</sup> facilitated the teaching of Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University (FPU) at 42 local churches across the denomination between 2014 and 2018. Stewardship seminars were offered in each location. During the same weekend, stewardship sermons were preached by the KRM Director, Jay Forseth. Additionally, significant denominational funds (over \$50,000) were spent in preaching to over 20,000 church attenders, while holding these seminars and starting the 42 FPU classes, with a total attendance of nearly 2,000 participants. The stated goal of the KRM Board was to assist the local church in teaching biblical stewardship principles to people connected in their local church communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note The Evangelical Church is a denomination formerly called the Evangelical United Brethren, not to be confused with the larger “evangelical church” (no capitals) containing multiple denominations.

This was a discipleship endeavor, with the intention of making a lasting difference to young families steeped in the growing burden of debt.

However, lead pastors in The Evangelical Church question if FPU and Dave Ramsey's "7 Baby Steps" develop faithful stewards who are more generous toward the ministries of their local Evangelical church. Data collected from these 42 Evangelical Churches indicates FPU graduates may NOT be more generous toward their local church, at least initially. It appears benefits to the local church budgets may be more prevalent nearer to the second or third year after initially hosting FPU.

In the Great Commission from Matthew 28:16-20, Jesus charges his followers to "Go make disciples...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." This process of making disciples, known in the church world as *discipleship*, involves many teachings, including grace, salvation, baptism, and obedience. Also included in this discipleship journey is the biblical concept of *stewardship*, the focus of this research paper.

The goal of stewardship in The Evangelical Church involves encouraging the followers of Jesus to be found faithful managing everything He has trusted them with, specifically with wisely stewarding their personal resources of time, talents, and treasures. A measurable part of stewardship, as it relates to the local church, is when faithful Christians follow through by sharing tithes and offerings with their local church.

In the Discipline of The Evangelical Church, stewardship is identified as a "value" in the denomination, with Paragraph 211 stating,

We believe that everything is owned by God (Psalm 24:1). Therefore, everything that we have has been entrusted to us by Him. He is our Master and we are His stewards (Matthew 25:14-30). We value giving to God as an act of worship, obedience, and investing in His Kingdom with our time, talent, and treasure. We

believe Jesus taught clearly that tithing is our minimum financial responsibility to the Kingdom work of God (Matthew 23:23). Therefore, our time, our talents, our treasures, the earth we inhabit, and everything else should be invested for Him in a way that brings Him honor (Genesis 1:28-29; Colossians 3:17).<sup>2</sup>

The *New Bible Dictionary* defines “steward” as one to whom care or honor has been entrusted, a temporary manager.<sup>3</sup> Most profoundly, it is used as the Christian’s responsibility, delegated to him by Christ (Greek, *oikonomia*), where all things belong to Him.<sup>4</sup>

Dave Ramsey’s FPU is an effective tool used by many churches and pastors to assist in discipling their community in biblical stewardship. Specifically, Dave Ramsey’s “7 Baby Steps” give instructions regarding faithful stewardship, concluding with the concept of generously sharing financial resources with others. Though implied throughout FPU, generosity is not stressed until Baby Step 7: “Build Wealth and Give Generously,” as well as in an extra lesson, which some churches do not find the time or importance to present.

The problem this research paper hopes to address is specifically the sharing of *tithes and offerings* in the local church. There are many other good works in generosity that God calls congregations to support, like Bible translation projects or community outreach events, but these will not be addressed here.

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Eckhardt, “The Discipline of the Evangelical Church,” Western Conference of the Evangelical Church, 2014, <http://www.westconf.net/discipline--rituals--policies--procedures.html>. Published every quadrennial immediately following General Conference. 2018 version not yet published.

<sup>3</sup> J.D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary* (London: The Inter-varsity Fellowship, 1962), 1145.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1145.

Field research was conducted through Portland Seminary's Doctor of Ministry coursework and required several meetings with Dave Ramsey's team.<sup>5</sup>

Dave Ramsey is obviously a supporter of his graduates being more generous. Even more so, he eventually implores his FPU students to remember that giving—specifically tithing—is a biblical mandate.<sup>6</sup> He has told many people to become *extravagant* givers. Listening to his radio program, it appears his walk has matched his talk relating to this issue, and he provides his stance on the meaning of generosity every chance he gets.

Still one wonders, if many of the churches in The Evangelical Church have hosted FPU and so many good folks have successfully graduated, shouldn't churches see an increase in giving in their annual budgets? Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the case. There appears to be a major disconnect surrounding the giving of tithes and offerings in The Evangelical Church and across denominational lines throughout America.

Ramsey Solutions states giving of FPU graduates increases dramatically (see Addendum 1, Chapter 1), doubling from giving less than 4% before taking the class, to giving 8% after the class.<sup>7</sup> There is an implication that the local church can expect to receive the same type of increase, but that it is not necessarily panning out. Several generosity studies have disclosed giving to the local church has not varied from 3%, as a

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<sup>5</sup> Angela Schatz, Joshua Collier, Sean Bess, Tony Leonis, and Dyllan Wilson: phone and email questions received from author, March 2018, transcript from DMin726 Field Report. Part of field research for this dissertation project.

<sup>6</sup> Dave Ramsey, "Tithing and Giving: Your 5 Questions Answered," DaveRamsey.com, December 6, 2017, <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/daves-advice-on-tithing-and-giving>.

<sup>7</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Fact Sheet." To learn even more about the benchmarks achieved by Ramsey Solutions through this class, refer to "Additional Financial Peace University Information" in Appendix B.

portion of income, for over four decades, according to David Kinnaman, President of the Barna Research Group.<sup>8</sup>

This disconnect between the expectations of local churches and the actual tithes received is not easily explained. This paper hopes to address what the church is actually reporting compared to what FPU class attenders define as “giving.” The Barna Group suggests different age groups think differently about generosity and sharing, perhaps including in their “tithe” volunteerism and hospitality.<sup>9</sup> These differing viewpoints should not be discarded or minimized, but they hardly pay church bills, which at the end of the day, is necessary to support the ministries of each local church.

### **Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University (FPU)**

Dave Ramsey’s FPU provides people with tools to be faithful stewards. Almost 5 million people have taken FPU in its 25-year history. Over 40,000 churches have hosted the nine-week course.<sup>10</sup> Graduates of FPU averaged \$5,300 of debt erased and \$2,700 of savings banked in the first 90 days after starting the class (refer to Addendum 1, Chapter 1), by selling unnecessary items or taking on extra work.<sup>11</sup> Financial stewardship issues taught in the class include debt elimination, budgeting, savings, investments, and generosity. Although unverified by outside data researchers, the average

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<sup>8</sup> Christopher J. Kopka, *The Generosity Gap: How Christians' Perceptions and Practices of Giving Are Changing: and What It Means for the Church* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2017), 62.

<sup>9</sup> Kopka, *The Generosity Gap*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Fact Sheet.”

<sup>11</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “The Average American and Financial Peace Members,” *Daveramsey.com* (blog), November 1, 2017. <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/the-average-american-and-financial-peace-members>. Published by Dave Ramsey’s own research division, with internal results from exit surveys of Financial Peace University graduates.



giving to all causes by FPU graduates doubled from 4% to 8%, per the research division of Ramsey Solutions.<sup>12</sup>

Supplementing FPU is the wildly popular Dave Ramsey Show, hosting 13 million radio and digital listeners on 600 radio stations, now the third-most-syndicated show in the United States, behind Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity.<sup>13</sup> Seven Dave Ramsey books have become best-sellers, including *Financial Peace* and *The Total Money Makeover*.<sup>14</sup>

When discussing the outreach effectiveness of Dave Ramsey, Randy Meyers, Conference Superintendent of the Pacific Conference in The Evangelical Church, states, “I like the fact that Dave Ramsey helps us invite unchurched people to participate in our classes. In almost every FPU class in our Oregon and Washington churches we have community members taking FPU who are seemingly unconnected to our church families.”<sup>15</sup> The previously mentioned Dave Ramsey show, played on radio stations in every state in America, thankfully reaches into non-Christian arenas. It has been noticed by this author when traveling nationwide, Dave Ramsey has made a concerted effort to place his radio show and book advertisements on secular radio stations, where a religiously diverse audience is more prevalent than strictly “Christian” radio stations.

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<sup>12</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “The Average American and Financial Peace Members.”

<sup>13</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Fact Sheet.”

<sup>14</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Fact Sheet.”

<sup>15</sup> From a side discussion on stewardship held at our denomination’s General Conference Session in the Summer of 2014 in Portland, Oregon. Our estimates of outside the church participation is near the one quarter mark for our denomination.

The research for this paper is not critical of the success of FPU nor of its founder. In fact, as previously mentioned, the author of this paper is a frequent FPU facilitator and has started 42 Dave Ramsey classes across our country. If any bias is exhibited by the author, it is strongly toward *supporting* FPU. Ramsey makes a positive difference for many Americans in reducing debt and wisely planning for the future by teaching solid budgeting and savings strategies. Many people wished Dave Ramsey would assist high school and college-aged students with his work, perhaps with an age-appropriate version of FPU. He responded, through his daughter Rachel Cruze, by implementing a program called *Foundations*.<sup>16</sup> This program is appreciated for its ability to instill financial discipline and stewardship concepts from an early age. Dave Ramsey has established a myriad of other resources for people of all ages in a variety of formats, both digital and in print, which may be found in Appendix C if interested.

*Foundations* and FPU are important discipling tools for local church pastors because of a shift in mentality toward giving to the local church. As will be expressed in the following chapter on the biblical foundations of giving, many modern churchgoers do not understand how churches rely on the tithes received to run the ministries of the church. Younger attenders are being bombarded by more giving opportunities than ever. According to Barna Research, Christian perceptions and practices about giving are changing, with older Christians being more likely to be generous with their local church,

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<sup>16</sup> David R. Poucher, "Teaching Personal Finance as a General Education Course in a Liberal Arts Institution," *Christian Business Academy Review* 12 (2017): 46. Archived. <https://cbfa-cbar.org/index.php/cbar/article/view/447>.

and younger Christians being more willing to connect themselves to various causes outside the church walls.<sup>17</sup>

### **The 7 Baby Steps**

The basic principles of FPU are centered around Dave Ramsey's 7 Baby Steps, outlined as follows:<sup>18</sup>

**Baby Step 1:** \$1,000 cash in a beginner emergency fund

**Baby Step 2:** Use the debt snowball to pay off all your debt but the house

**Baby Step 3:** Create a fully funded emergency fund of 3 to 6 months of expenses

**Baby Step 4:** Invest 15% of your household income into retirement

**Baby Step 5:** Start saving for college

**Baby Step 6:** Pay off your home early

**Baby Step 7:** Build wealth and give generously

In the Dave Ramsey method, these steps are to be achieved in order, with success gauged by attendees changing their financial behaviors. Each successful step is celebrated. Achievements center on eliminating debt while living on less than a person earns. Saving and investing are paramount to achieving goals of funding college tuition and retirement. Getting out from under a house mortgage is considered wise.<sup>19</sup>

The reader is asked to notice the final part of Baby Step 7, "Give generously." Generosity is where focus is directed in this paper. Other words for generosity are charity, benevolence, and philanthropy. One might even hear generosity being described in churches as giving or sharing.

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<sup>17</sup> Kopka, *The Generosity Gap*.

<sup>18</sup> Dave Ramsey, *Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University Member Workbook* (Nashville: Lampo Licensing, LLC, 2012), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Dave Ramsey and Sharon Ramsey, *Financial Peace Revisited* (New York: Viking, 2003), 271. A more in depth description of the 7 Baby Steps may be found in "Financial Peace Supporting Materials" found in Appendix A.

### **Pastors' Hopes and Expectations for FPU**

Dave Ramsey's FPU has not met expectations of some local pastors in The Evangelical Church for increasing tithes and offerings.

Most pastors are not in the business of discipling Christians on biblical stewardship principles simply to raise more tithes and offerings. They truly want to help their church communities win with money through Dave Ramsey's program. It is a shepherd's heart to make a difference in the individual lives of his members, and many pastors use this class to reach out into their communities to assist families and get them out of crushing debt and give them hope for their financial future.

However, pastors may have a case for expecting tangible results that not only disciple their community but also benefit the local church. Churches pay \$249 each for the leader's kit of FPU.<sup>20</sup> Total that up for 40,000 churches who have taught FPU and it equals almost \$10 million. In addition, churches provide advertising, scholarships, free childcare, supplies, utilities, snacks, and meeting space at potentially high costs to the local congregation. Experience has shown in the 42 classes started in our denomination that the class may easily cost more than \$1,000 for a church to facilitate, possibly substantially more. Forty thousand churches at over a \$1,000 investment adds up to \$40 million, in addition to the \$10 million already accounted for. Concurrently, families attending Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University pay \$129 to be enrolled.<sup>21</sup> Families

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<sup>20</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Starting a Class," FPU Central, January 1, 2018. <https://www.daveramsey.com/get-started>.

<sup>21</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Starting a Class." Appendix C, provided by Ramsey Solutions, provides a detailed timeline of benchmark achievements for a timeline of FPU details.

may include a single person or a couple, and a small percentage bring a child. Total that up and we are talking huge dollars, possibly nearly a *half billion* in sales, and none of that is going to the local church, as 100% goes to Ramsey Solutions.

With Dave Ramsey making money on both the facilitating church AND the individual family or single class attendee, it's no wonder pastors hope for some return on investment for their sacrifice and time in facilitating FPU in their church.

### **The Goal of Biblical Stewardship**

The late Larry Burkett defined stewardship in broader terms than our ability to handle money, “stuff and things.” In fact, he believed stewardship was God finding us faithful as temporary managers (stewards) of everything he entrusted us with, including our time, talents, and treasures.<sup>22</sup> This definition will help build the proper footing for biblical stewardship.

Randy Alcorn, in *The Treasure Principle*, reminds his readers, “You can’t take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.”<sup>23</sup> Many interpret this quote to mean there is an eternal value to being a faithful steward, as if Christians were to be careful in delaying earthly satisfaction by instead stockpiling heavenly treasures. Being wise with our time and talents is just as important as being wise with our treasures (our money, “stuff and things”). We should use them all for the glory of God! However, for purposes of this research paper, and because it is simple to quantify, focus will be placed on financial

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<sup>22</sup> Larry Burkett, *The Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 23.

<sup>23</sup> Randy C. Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle: Discovering the Secret of Joyful Giving* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2001), 68. Copy given to nearly every participant in our denomination at several churches as part of their stewardship emphasis months.

stewardship through tithes and offerings. Quoting Acts 20:35, Kent Hughes writes in his book *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, “We do well to remember that Jesus said, ‘It is more blessed to give, than it is to receive’ ...may we give ourselves and all we have to God.”<sup>24</sup>

Robert Morris labels stewardship as an adventure where “generous living” ensures Christians won’t get caught in the snare of “serving both God and mammon,” quoted from Matthew 6:24.<sup>25</sup> Of course, in this context, mammon means money.

Perfection is not the goal of stewardship. *Faithfulness* is the goal. In fact, Jesus himself teaches this goal in the parable of the talents. He warns He is leaving, then explains when He returns, stewards must give an accounting of how they managed God’s resources. Jesus says these sweet words for those being found faithful: “Well done, good and faithful servant!”<sup>26</sup> These are the words we strive to hear from our Master. Unfaithful stewards will not hear those words from Jesus and will not receive the rewards.

Rewards? Does that imply a guarantee of a larger home or a nicer car if one is a faithful steward? Many will argue, “absolutely not!” The rewards are eternal in value, stated in Matthew 16:27: “For the Son of Man [Jesus] is going to come in His father’s glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done.”

To explain stewardship even deeper, in *My Heart—Christ’s Home*, Robert Boyd Munger implores all people to “transfer the title” of everything we own to Jesus,

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<sup>24</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 199.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Morris, *The Blessed Life: Unlocking the Rewards of Generous Living* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2016), 76. A caution on the topic of blessing is discussed later in this project. Please don’t confuse “blessing” with prosperity preaching or “name it and claim it” theology.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 25:14-30.

lowering ourselves to be only managers of it all, by saying, “From now on, you are going to be the owner and master of the house. I am going to be the servant.”<sup>27</sup>

### **What Are the Reasons Cited Why Churchgoers Do Not Give?**

Acts 5:1-11 describes a dysfunctional giving situation of sorts. A couple, Ananias and Sapphira, sells property and offers a financial gift to the church in Jerusalem. Only, it’s sadly revealed they have misrepresented their generosity and lied to the Holy Spirit; they claimed to donate the full sale price when in reality they withheld a portion. They attempted to deceive church leaders, doubling down on their deceit. Quickly, each one drops dead and their lifeless bodies are carried out. There was no requirement for them to donate all the proceeds, no pressure from the church at all about the rules of the generosity. Why would they lie about their giving?

The short answer, according to Ron Blue, is that financial challenges tend to go back to spiritual issues. Someone’s heart is not in the right place with the Lord and is exposed in all its filthiness.<sup>28</sup>

There are many reasons cited why churchgoers do not give generously to the ministries of their local church. Several key reasons continually rise to the surface when answering this question and they seem to center around personal financial difficulties or overall trust issues.

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<sup>27</sup> Robert Boyd Munger, *My Heart—Christ’s Home* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 28.

<sup>28</sup> Ron Blue, “Wisdom For Death: For Life,” ronblue.com, 2017, <https://www.ronblue.com/Portals/0/Wisdom-for-Wealth-For-Life-Newsletter-Fall-2017.pdf>, 3.

Churchleaders.com reports ten reasons people don't tithe to their local church, and the list includes: People can't afford to because of personal debt, they don't trust preachers, they give elsewhere outside the church, they don't know why to give, they don't understand giving from the Bible, and they are afraid to out of a lack of trust of God.<sup>29</sup>

On the website [get.tithe.ly](http://get.tithe.ly), another author also has a top 10 list why people don't give. Jesse Wisnewski relates: They don't know why, they are in transition and are in a difficult financial position (personal debt reason most often cited), they don't know how, and they don't trust church leadership.<sup>30</sup> Notice, many reasons are the same on both lists. Specifically, personal debt, trust issues, and lacking the "why" of giving.

To his credit, Dave Ramsey's FPU helps with the "too much debt" problem as he famously teaches his "Debt Snowball"<sup>31</sup> strategies at length. Churches in our denomination stress debt reduction techniques as one of the greatest strengths of FPU. Ron Blue, Larry Burkett, Brian Kluth, Mary Hunt, Howard Dayton, and a host of other reputable names join Dave Ramsey in stressing the importance of spending less than you earn while avoiding the personal debt trap.

Author Mary Hunt, in her ministry called Debt-Proof Living, explains this truth in her books:

Mortgages, credit card balances, student loans, car loans, and home improvement loans have become a way of life for the majority of us. And debt is putting not only our present at risk as we live paycheck to paycheck, but our futures in

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Stone, "Top 10 Reasons People Don't Tithe," ChurchLeader.com, May 5, 2015, <https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/253164-top-10-reasons-people-dont-tithe.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Jesse Wisnewski, "Are Your Church Members NOT Giving? Here Are 10 Reasons Why," Tithe.ly, 2019, <https://get.tithe.ly/blog/7-reasons-why-people-dont-give-to-your-church>.

<sup>31</sup> Dave Ramsey, "Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University Members Workbook," Chapter 2.



jeopardy as shockingly few of us have enough put away for retirement. I want readers to embrace the radical but simple truth that they don't need more credit or more stuff—that they can live their lives debt-free.<sup>32</sup>

Reasons for not giving may only be excuses, however, as people hold onto their possessions with a tight-fisted clench. Like former Evangelical Church Western Conference Superintendent Dr. Dale Erbele said, “The reason is never the reason. Only God knows the motivation of the heart.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Review and Path Forward**

1. Stewardship seminars were held and FPU classes supported at a cost of over \$1,000 to each of 42 churches across the denomination of The Evangelical Church.<sup>34</sup> Pastors wonder about the return on their investment.
2. Over 5 million people in the United States have taken FPU in its 25-year history and over 40,000 churches have hosted this popular course taught by Dave Ramsey.<sup>35</sup>
3. Dave Ramsey's “7 Baby Steps to Financial Freedom”<sup>36</sup> encourage generosity but wait until the final step to highlight it, with “Build Wealth and Give Generously.”

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<sup>32</sup> Mary Hunt, “How to Live on a Budget and Love It,” *Everyday Cheapskate*, September 19, 2019, <https://www.everydaycheapskate.com/money-and-finances/how-to-live-on-a-budget-and-love-it/>.

<sup>33</sup> Taken from a brief phone conversation while Dr. Erbele served as Conference Superintendent while we were working through the challenge of a few church members leaving our local church in 2010 in Columbus, Montana.

<sup>34</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Starting a Class.”

<sup>35</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Fact Sheet.”

<sup>36</sup> Ramsey, “Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University Member Workbook,” 10.

4. Per the research division of Ramsey Solutions, the average giving (also called sharing or generosity) to all charitable causes by FPU graduates doubled from 4% to 8% after successful completion of the class.<sup>37</sup>
5. Biblical foundations of stewardship discussed so far include: Psalm 24:1 – “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it”; 1 Corinthians 4:2 – “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful”; Malachi 3:8,10 – “How are we robbing you? In tithes and offerings...Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse”; and 2 Corinthians 9:7 – “Each of you should give what you have decided in your own heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”<sup>38</sup>
6. Lead pastors in The Evangelical Church question if FPU and Dave Ramsey’s “7 Baby Steps” develop faithful stewards who are more generous toward the ministries of their local Evangelical church.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation introduced the topic of stewardship and the potential problem in The Evangelical Church with graduates’ giving of tithes and offerings NOT going up after successful completion of FPU. Specifically, there is a question how the “7 Baby Steps” may possibly fall short in encouraging *earlier* the biblical concept of tithing. Therefore, there was a need in The Evangelical Church to assess the effect of 42 FPU classes on local church tithes and offerings. There appears to be a disconnect between the claims of Ramsey Solutions and the generosity of FPU graduates in The Evangelical

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<sup>37</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Fact Sheet.”

<sup>38</sup> Psalm 24:1; Malachi 3:8,10; 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Church, at least as far as generosity going up in the first three years after the class has been facilitated.

A path forward for the rest of this dissertation includes further sharing of scriptural foundations relating to stewardship. Chapter 2 will look at both Old Testament and New Testament instructions regarding generosity. Chapter 3 will dig deeper into historical perspectives of stewardship, both inside and outside of The Evangelical Church. Differing viewpoints of generosity will be discussed as the matter of tithing as a commandment will be unpacked. The difference between “tithes” and “offerings” will also be clarified.

The heart of this dissertation beats in Chapter 4, where the data from 42 churches who began FPU (with the help of the denomination) will be shared, then interpreted. Dave Ramsey’s team has requested the results of this data, as they are looking for outside sources of research regarding FPU. Claims will be made as to the effectiveness of FPU in this specific denomination.

Chapter 5 will offer potential solutions and clarification regarding the perceived disconnect between the hope of local church pastors and the measurable results that were achieved between the years of 2014 to 2018. Finally, Chapter 6 will conclude with practical application suggestions, hopefully making the point for higher frequency and saturation of FPU in our denomination through Dave Ramsey’s *Momentum* program.

## **Addendum 1, Chapter 1:**

### **Fact Sheet: Ramsey Solutions**

#### *General Statistics*<sup>39</sup>

- More than 5 million people have participated in Financial Peace University
- More than 14 million radio and digital listeners weekly to The Dave Ramsey Show
- More than 600 radio affiliates to The Dave Ramsey Show
- More than two million users of the EveryDollar online budgeting tool
- More than 25 years of Dave on-air
- More than 11 million books sold combined
- More than 15 books written by Dave Ramsey with 7 of them debuting on best-sellers lists including Financial Peace, More Than Enough, The Total Money Makeover, EntreLeadership, The Complete Guide to Money, Legacy Journey and Smart Money Smart Kids
- More than 8 million total combined circulation of the "Dave Says" and "Dave Ramsey's EntreLeadership," syndicated columns in more than 500 publications worldwide
- More than 1 million live event attendees
- More than 4 Million high school students in more than 16,000 educational institutions in all 50 states participate in our Foundations High School Program

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.daveramsey.com/pr/fact-sheet>.

- More than 25,000 families use Foundations in Personal Finance: Homeschool Edition
- More than 800 Ramsey Solutions team members

### *Milestones<sup>40</sup>*

- 1992: Self-published Financial Peace
- 1992: Began The Dave Ramsey Show
- 1994: Began teaching Financial Peace University
- 1997: Financial Peace becomes a best-seller
- 1999: More Than Enough published and debuted a best-seller
- 2002: The “Dave Says” column is launched in newspaper publications
- 2003: The Total Money Makeover published and debuted as a best-seller
- 2011: EntreLeadership published and debuted as a best-seller
- 2011: Ramsey Press published Quitter and it debuted as a best-seller
- 2013: Ramsey Press published Start and debuted as a best-seller
- 2013: Ramsey Press publishes Legacy Journey and it becomes a best-seller
- 2013: Launched the Legacy Journey class
- 2013: The Dave Ramsey Show launched a 24-hour online streaming video channel
- 2014: Smart Money Smart Kids debuted as a best-seller
- 2014: The company is rebranded as Ramsey Solutions
- 2015: Launched the Smart Money Smart Kids class

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.daveramsey.com/pr/fact-sheet>.

- 2015: Launched the Smart Money Tour live event
- 2015: The Total Money Makeover surpasses 5 million copies sold
- 2015: Launched Chris Brown's True Stewardship radio show
- 2015: Launched SmartDollar
- 2015: Launched EveryDollar
- 2016: Retire Inspired debuts as a best-seller
- 2016: EveryDollar surpasses 1 million users
- 2017: Business Boutique debuts as a best-seller
- 2017: EveryDollar surpasses two million users
- 2017: The Dave Ramsey Show celebrates 25 years on-air

## CHAPTER 2: BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP FOUNDATIONS

*8 “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.*

*9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.*

*10 “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.*

*11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?*

*12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?*

### ***Luke 16:8-12***

To understand what scripture teaches about stewardship, one should start with the first verse in Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In this creation narrative, God demonstrated his absolute rights of ownership over all things. Our ability to grasp the fact that God is “creator” is fundamentally critical in proclaiming him the “owner” of all things. We are merely temporary “managers” in our created position in the universe.

It is necessary to establish a solid biblical foundation of stewardship for this dissertation. Not only will the scriptures be utilized to build this foundation, but prevalent Bible commentaries will be quoted to support basic stewardship principles. It should be noted, however, that stewardship is NOT a salvation issue and there will be interpretations of scripture that will not necessarily be agreed upon by all Christians,

especially concerning the tithe. There is room for healthy discussion, for sure. Nonetheless, the overall biblical principle of stewardship is undeniably Christian, regardless if one takes the scriptures literally with little room for gray, or if one interprets God's Word about stewardship within the grace-filled boundaries of black and white. Stewardship, giving, generosity, and sharing go hand in hand for the Christian believer who manages their resources wisely.

### **Key Scriptures**

Another foundation of biblical Christian stewardship is built upon Psalm 24:1, which states, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." God owns everything! Without this foundation, nothing else will make much sense in stewardship. God owns the hills, the cattle on the hills, and the oil beneath the hills. We don't really "own" anything, and, as our grandparents said, "We can't take it with us." All we have has been given by God. Everything that is good originated with God and is a gift from God. In our denomination's stewardship seminars, we say, "God owns the air we breathe and even the spit in our mouths." Job 1:21 says, "Naked we came into the world, and naked we will depart." A pastor friend jokes, "There's never been a U-Haul behind a hearse." Our responsibility is to be found faithful with what God temporarily trusts us with (1 Corinthians 4:2).

In the scriptures, there are over 2,400 verses on stewardship.<sup>1</sup> A full two-thirds of Jesus' parables are on this topic, when you include the prior stewardship definition of

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<sup>1</sup> Larry Burkett, *Dollars and Sense: What the Bible Says about You and Your Money* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1993), inside cover.



time, talents, and treasures.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, the Bible has much to impart on this topic, making it an important principle to be disciplined on.

Additionally, scripture states, “To whom much is given, much is required,”<sup>3</sup> which infers we should prove faithful as stewards. Supporting this inference, 1 Corinthians 4:2 states we are to found faithful when we are given a trust to steward. The parable of the talents tells us some type of heavenly reward will be given when it declares, “Come and share your Master’s happiness.”<sup>4</sup> Again, to be very clear, stewardship is NOT a salvation issue, for we are saved by grace, through faith. It is not something we can earn!<sup>5</sup>

Nor is stewardship leverage, where we expect God to bless us more because we think we have done something to deserve his blessings. Our relationship with Jesus does not work that way. Fellow pastor Bob Conover says, “Don’t give to get, because God is always searching our motives.”<sup>6</sup> We would do well to check our hearts and minds to ensure we are being good stewards for holy motivations, rather than selfish ones. Many pastors in our denomination have denounced the so-called “health and wealth” prosperity teachings, where one is promised extensive material wealth if they pray in faith, then name and claim the blessings. Most of us would say the blessings from a relationship with Jesus are immaterial. Rather, they include those things which are eternal in value,

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<sup>2</sup> Stan Toler and Linda Toler, *The Cycle of Victorious Giving: Your Time, Your Talent, Your Treasure* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2004), 41.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 12:48. Please note, the scriptures listed in this chapter are not an exhaustive list.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 25:23.

<sup>5</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9.

<sup>6</sup> Heard at a regional meeting of eight pastors from The Evangelical Church, Fall of 2015, Absarokee, Montana.

like “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”<sup>7</sup>

Regrettably, both consumerism and materialism hinder true stewardship. The website gotquestions.org emphatically states we must be cautious of the constant obsession with selfishly acquiring more and more, as any preoccupation, obsession, or fascination with anything other than God is sinful and is displeasing to God,<sup>8</sup> quoting the scripture, “Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.”<sup>9</sup> In the end, King Solomon, supposedly the richest and wisest man who ever lived, came to the conclusion that we are to “Fear God, and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man, and all else is meaningless, meaningless.”<sup>10</sup>

Trusting God is at the center of faithful biblical stewardship. God entrusts us with His resources. We, in turn, return to Him our tithes and offerings, and trust He will provide all our needs. If God owns all the world’s riches, and he promises to take care of our needs, then we should be content in all situations.<sup>11</sup> In fact, “The steward’s contentment is not based upon the steward’s circumstances.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Galatians 5:22-23.

<sup>8</sup> S. Michael Houdemann, “How Should a Christian View Materialism?” GotQuestions.org, July 1, 2006, <https://www.gotquestions.org/materialism-Christian.html>. Materialism is synonymous with consumerism for purposes of this research project.

<sup>9</sup> Ecclesiastes 5:10.

<sup>10</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:13.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko, *The Millionaire Next Door: The Surprising Secrets of America's Wealthy* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2016), appendix.

<sup>12</sup> Dave Sutherland, *33 Days of Stewardship Discovery Guide: Finding and Fulfilling Your Role as a Steward of God's Riches* (Camarillo, CA: Spire Resources, 2004).

Contentment is critical in this area of being found as a faithful steward by God. Paul says to Timothy, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, in the Western world, being truly content is an unusual thing, as we rarely appear to be satisfied with the number of our possessions. Despite our culture, however, Paul further advises believers to learn contentment, as he writes in the book of Philippians, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”<sup>14</sup>

God doesn’t want anything to prevent us from fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, finances can be a stumbling block for Christians and non-Christians alike. Practicing faithful stewardship provides true financial freedom and is a part of healthy spiritual growth. Without financial freedom, we might be easily distracted, as the “Parable of the Sower” mentions in three of the four Gospels when declaring “the deceitfulness of wealth” chokes out the spiritual growth of a new believer.<sup>16</sup>

This “deceitfulness of wealth” may not be a problem in some cultures, but without question it is in the United States of America, one of the wealthiest countries in the history of the world, according to presidential candidate Bernie Sanders.<sup>17</sup> One may

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Timothy 6:6.

<sup>14</sup> Philippians 4:12-13.

<sup>15</sup> Howard Dayton, *Your Money Map: 7-step Guide to True Financial Freedom* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015). Howard Dayton followed Larry Burkett at Crown Financial Ministries after Larry Burkett’s heaven-going.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 13:3-23, Mark 4:2-20, Luke 8:4-15.

<sup>17</sup> Heard on a debate stage in the Spring of 2016, while Bernie Sanders was running for the Democratic Nomination for President of the United States.

wonder, do these biblical stewardship principles apply in wealthy countries the same as they do in poor third-world countries? In an exercise in applying critical thinking skills, Nathan Purdy, from Ramsey Solutions Stewardship Support, was asked if Dave Ramsey's stewardship principles apply across cultures. His response surprised this author: "At this time, we do not ship resources internationally and we cannot offer any support to international FPU classes until we are ready to do so from a legal and support perspective." Admittedly, this is bothersome. Shouldn't biblical doctrines travel?

Maybe it is the legal and support frameworks that do not travel, not the principles. One should hope so. It would be important for facilitators of FPU to know that they are teaching foundational biblical lessons, not just not just cultural ones. However, it is not hard to think why strategies of investing and retirement would not sell in third world, poverty-stricken countries. Hopefully, staying out of debt and being generous are biblically based regardless of where one resides in our world.

### **Tithes and Offerings**

More often than not, when discussing good stewardship, many people think of how we manage our financial resources. One part of wise stewardship is generosity, specifically with our financial giving toward the ministries of our local church. It is necessary to address the often-asked question of whether the tithe is a biblical part of stewardship. Many pastors in our denomination support the principles of the 10% tithe, with the understanding of it being a "firstfruit"<sup>18</sup> given to the "storehouse."<sup>19</sup> However,

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<sup>18</sup> Proverbs 3:9-10.

<sup>19</sup> Nehemiah 10:35.

some pastors do not support tithing and may argue it is an Old Testament concept unnecessary for discipleship.<sup>20</sup> Still, in talking with nearly every pastor in our denomination, all support the concept of generosity, and they often quote Matthew 6:19-21, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

It is also important to note that, for purposes of this dissertation, Dave Ramsey himself is a supporter of the tithe.<sup>21</sup> It is this author’s belief that Jesus carried the tithe principle into the New Testament with the admonition to the Pharisees to not neglect the tithe.<sup>22</sup> The *Dictionary of Theology* states, “The principles of Christian giving are clearly set forth in Paul’s letters to the Corinthian church. Perhaps Paul did not discuss the tithe outright because of proportional giving, where one is not limited to only giving the tithe.”<sup>23</sup>

One facet of biblical stewardship that is simple to measure is the sharing of tithes and offerings with the local church. Many scriptures in both the Old and New Testament, including Malachi chapter 3, discuss these issues at great length, with commands from

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<sup>20</sup> Guy Burgo, *Free to Give as God Intended: A Biblical Look at Christian Giving* (Woodland Park, CO: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Dave Ramsey, “Tithing and Giving: Your 5 Questions Answered,” DaveRamsey.com. December 6, 2017, <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/daves-advice-on-tithing-and-giving>.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 23:23.

<sup>23</sup> Everett Falconer Harrison, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1966), 525.

God such as, “Bring the *whole* tithe into the storehouse.”<sup>24</sup> The “storehouse”<sup>25</sup> is defined as the place where people gathered for worship, communion, teaching, and fellowship.<sup>26</sup> In those times, the storehouse was the tent, tabernacle, or temple. In modern times, the storehouse is the local church. The tithe is literally interpreted as one-tenth,<sup>27</sup> or 10% of the increase of one’s earnings, given to the storehouse. Tithes are shared without placing restraints on the local church, like you are giving to God himself, as in returning to God that which is already His!

“Firstfruit” tithing—not giving from our leftovers—is a blessing to participate in because it solves the problem of a selfish human heart. We don’t hang on to our resources with a clenched fist. We simply hold on with an open hand as we trust God to provide all our needs.<sup>28</sup> Many Christians do not understand this principle of firstfruit tithing, and subsequently fall short on needed funds to be generous with at the end of each month because the funds have been spent on something else.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, offerings may be earmarked (designated) for specific ministries, like world missions, food banks, or building campaigns. These are, by definition, offerings, not tithes, as they are funds

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<sup>24</sup> Malachi 3:10. Emphasis mine.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Chronicles 26:17.

<sup>26</sup> Bible Study Tools, s.v. “Storehouses,” December 6, 2017, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/storehouses/>

<sup>27</sup> Howard Dayton, *Your Money Counts* (Chermside, Australia: COMPASS - Finances God's Way, 2015), 77. Howard Dayton founded Compass Ministries to improve and distribute the small group studies globally. He is not a competitor of Larry Burkett, rather a co-laborer who once served on Larry Burkett’s board at Crown Financial.

<sup>28</sup> Dayton, *Your Money Counts*, 80.

<sup>29</sup> Christian Smith, Michael O Emerson, and Patricia Snell, *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don't Give Away More Money* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

restricted for a certain project. Additionally, gifts shared with para-church ministries outside the church walls are not tithes; they are offerings.

Jesus carried the concept of tithing into the New Testament with his discussion with the Pharisees in Luke chapter 11 and Matthew chapter 23. The religious leaders were tithing their spices, but were neglecting other more important issues like justice, mercy, and faithfulness. He specifically told them they should not neglect tithing, while practicing the others.<sup>30</sup> By stating this, he raised the expectations on the Pharisees to do even more than the tithe law required.

Interestingly, Paul instructs each person in the Corinthian church to prayerfully decide in their own heart how much they want to give, without any undue pressure or compulsion.<sup>31</sup> Many pastors interpret this as grace-filled choice, which allows the believer substantial freedom, where some may decide to cheerfully give less, or even decide to give substantially more than 10%. This practice of returning to God His tithes and offerings is an antidote to consumerism that connects “faith to actual practice.”<sup>32</sup>

Dave Ramsey’s stewardship material called *Momentum* states individual giving toward one’s local church has hovered somewhere around 3% as a portion of income and has not increased for 40 years.<sup>33</sup> Obviously, 3% is not even close to a full 10% tithe.

Dave Ramsey has often said, “Stop telling your church to give, teach them how.”<sup>34</sup> Yet,

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<sup>30</sup> Luke 11:42 and Matthew 23:23.

<sup>31</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:7.

<sup>32</sup> Vincent Jude Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 1. This resource was one of the most cited resources from Cohort 8 in this Leadership from a Global Perspective DMin program at Portland State university.

<sup>33</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Momentum.”

<sup>34</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Momentum.”

he waits until Baby Step number 7 before highlighting giving. For some people that step may take years or even more than a decade to achieve.

Amazingly, pastors in our denomination sometimes find it difficult to preach and teach on tithing. A 2014 denomination-wide survey in The Evangelical Church, conducted by KRM, exposed the fact that only 27% of our churches hosted stewardship classes in the prior year, and only 60% of our churches had at least one sermon about tithing in the last year. Only one-third of our churches nationwide had a regular method of discipling their congregants in this important area of biblical stewardship, of which just one facet is tithing. No wonder we saw a great need and started 42 churches in FPU and taught a stewardship seminar!

The results of this comprehensive survey in our denomination are listed in the table below. Not all categories are applicable to this dissertation, but most are, especially “section f,” where 99% of our pastors said God owned everything and we should be faithful stewards, but “section c” contradicts their actions by showing only 33% of the churches regularly disciple their congregants in biblical stewardship principles.



*Table 1 – 2014 Stewardship Survey in the Evangelical Church<sup>35</sup>*

CONFERENCE	W	SE	E	NC	EC	P	TOTAL
a. Preached on tithing in last year	53%	100%	76%	64%	60%	65%	<b>60%</b>
b. Held stewardship class last year	50%	33%	21%	25%	7%	25%	<b>27%</b>
c. Disciple regularly on stewardship	46%	33%	41%	25%	17%	31%	<b>33%</b>
d. Online giving accepted	44%	33%	9%	36%	7%	19%	<b>23%</b>
e. Pastors currently tithe with joy	90%	100%	82%	100%	93%	91%	<b>91%</b>
f. God owns everything—we should be found faithful as stewards	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%	<b>99%</b>
g. We should include church in Will	87%	87%	94%	93%	90%	85%	<b>88%</b>
h. Taken on church debt	33%	33%	38%	61%	17%	31%	<b>33%</b>
*Churches who received assistance from Denomination in first month	9	1	3	7	2	0	<b>22</b>

It is noteworthy that under “section b,” Dave Ramsey’s FPU was the class most often facilitated in 2014 (70%), with Larry Burkett’s Crown Financial Ministries being the class second-most-often held (20%), and all others combined in a distant third, with Willow Creek Community Church’s Financial Freedom class topping the list of the other 10%.

Access was granted to hundreds of our local pastors to speak their mind to the KRM Board regarding the direction of our focus on these topics, and these pastors expressed sincere gratitude to be asked their personal thoughts on stewardship. Perhaps in the history of our denomination, there has never been a survey conducted like the one above. It was revealing in several ways. First of all, pastors did not understand what other pastors were doing in this important area of discipleship. Secondly, the pastors discovered they were not alone in feeling sheepish about talking about money from the

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<sup>35</sup> Survey conducted in 2014 by this author while serving as Stewardship Director for the denomination of the Evangelical Church.

pulpit. Many pastors do not feel comfortable talking about personal finances, especially since some see this as being self-serving, as in, “all the church wants from me is my money.” Perhaps most revealing was the divide between what the pastors believed about stewardship (we should be found faithful as stewards) to what they were actually teaching their flocks about the same (only 33% were).

### **Generosity**

The initial Financial Peace University class was 13 weeks in duration. A famous quote by Dave Ramsey mentioned often in the early years was, “Live like no one else now so later you can live like no one else.”<sup>36</sup> In a later revision, after listening to constituents, including pastors, Dave Ramsey shortened the course to 9 weeks and added this to the quote, “Live like no one else now so later you can live *and give* like no one else.”<sup>37</sup> There is no question Dave Ramsey is interested in graduates being more generous financially! There should be no debate on that. This author believes Dave Ramsey’s team thankfully listened to the counsel of the many pastors who facilitated FPU in their local churches.

Generosity is a biblical stewardship principle. The related concepts of sharing, giving, and philanthropy are in scripture hundreds of times, including generosity with time, talents, and treasures. As is so well-written in 2 Corinthians 9:7, God loves a cheerful giver.

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<sup>36</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Momentum.”

<sup>37</sup> Dave Ramsey, *Dave Ramsey’s Complete Guide to Money* (Nashville: Harpercollins Religious, 2015), 8.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon wrote much about wealth, prosperity, money, generosity, and frugality. Please refer to Appendix 1 at the end of this chapter.

Wesley Willmer, in *Revolution in Generosity*, encourages stewards to be rich toward God and others, assisting in one's own spiritual growth by being trustworthy givers.<sup>38</sup> Even John Wooden, the winningest college basketball coach in NCAA history, includes generosity as part of his *Pyramid of Success*.<sup>39</sup> Mark Petersen, in *Love Giving Well*, states philanthropy is much more than a transaction: "It can be the moment for personal transformation, for realignment of priorities, a humbling process of grace."<sup>40</sup>

Doctor of Ministry students talk often about American consumerism and capitalism as being challenges for Christians in this journey of generosity. William T. Cavanaugh states in *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*, "One can always send a check to help feed the hungry, but one's charitable preferences will always be in competition with one's own endless desires."<sup>41</sup> In his dissertation, Darryl Geffken studies American giving habits, and concludes consumerism and "privilege" is a barrier to generosity, with any U.S. citizen who travels around the globe able to convey this condition through comparing spending habits.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Wesley Kenneth Willmer, *Revolution in Generosity: Transforming Stewards to Be Rich Toward God* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 25.

<sup>39</sup> John Wooden and Jay Carty, *Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2015), 26-27. John Wooden was a childhood hero of this author and was instrumental in disciplining young athletes like himself.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Petersen and Lorna Dueck, *Love Giving Well: The Pilgrimage of Philanthropy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 6. Mark Peterson is part of the Doctoral program with this author at Portland Seminary.

<sup>41</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2009), 956.

<sup>42</sup> Darryl Geffken, *What Motivates High-percentage Giving Among Christians: Experiences That May Help a Consumerist and Privileged American Church* (PhD diss., Gonzaga University, 2014).

Further readings from *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism* struggle with Christians who use generosity to pat themselves on the back, as if they were doing God a favor when being generous with others. His quote is painfully difficult to read: “Because church membership confers on its members an ethical imprimatur [license]—a certificate of moral qualification—that is simultaneously good for business, it comes to be highly valued by those who want to get ahead.”<sup>43</sup> American materialism is astoundingly difficult to overcome.

It is constructive to agree with Robert Coleman in *Discipleshift*, where he reminds Americans that mature Christ-followers make a transition from “accumulating” to “deploying” in this arena of generosity, and he stresses 2 Corinthians 9:6, which tells us to remember whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly.<sup>44</sup> Rich or poor, people who share with others in a variety of ways receive tangible internal benefits that bring satisfaction, with the more generosity, the more opportunities for contentment.<sup>45</sup>

Yes, there are other forms of generosity: volunteering, hospitality, and emotional support have been suggested.<sup>46</sup> And yes, sharing of time<sup>47</sup> is another form of giving, but once again, this is harder to quantify and rarely pays the church bills. To repeat, this research project focuses only on tithes and offerings to the local church.

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<sup>43</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 293.

<sup>44</sup> Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Emerson Coleman, *DiscipleShift Five Steps That Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 199.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko, *The Millionaire Next Door: The Surprising Secrets of America’s Wealthy* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2016), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Brian Edgar, “Time for God: Christian Stewardship and the Gift of Time,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 27, no. 2 (2003): 128-146.

<sup>47</sup> Edgar, “Time for God.”

Randy Alcorn states, generosity is like saying “thank you” to God, and also like saying, “I love you, God,” notably like the example of the Corinthian church whose gifts were “overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God” in 2 Corinthians 9:12.<sup>48</sup>

Noteworthy Bible commentaries written on the topic of stewardship support the biblical foundations of being responsible before God for managing his resources. Though not all commentaries necessarily agree on the commandment of tithing, all would agree on the biblical teaching of a heart of generosity. The differing opinions surrounding tithing will be unpackaged in Chapter 3, while this chapter will highlight several key stewardship scriptures.

Two well-established and enduring Bible commentary series have been resourced for this project. First, *Eerdman’s Commentary* has been selected as the Bible commentary of choice because of its longstanding respected emphasis on Greek and Hebrew analyses of key biblical texts. Our denomination has used this resource for the training of its pastors, so it is logical to cite this resource. Secondly, the *NIV Application Commentary* has been selected. None other than Billy Graham has endorsed this resource, so with his support, it is hard to go in a wrong direction. The reader will notice these were not written in the past 10 years, which is part of the point of using time-tested theological interpretations of scripture.

Although there are literally thousands of Bible verses on stewardship, we will look at only these four, the ones mentioned earlier in this dissertation, from two of the four Gospels.

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<sup>48</sup> Randy C. Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle: Discovering the Secret of Joyful Giving* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2001), 34. This resource is given to our church attenders across the denomination when their church is entering a building campaign.

Matthew 23:23: Jesus has stern rebukes for the Pharisees and other religious leaders on a variety of topics in this lengthy diatribe beginning at verse 13 of Matthew 23. He pronounces 7 woes on their behavior and does not pull any punches. He calls them names like whitewashed tombs, hypocrites, blind guides, snakes, brood of vipers, and blind fools. Not surprisingly, he touches robustly on tithing.

How does one relate the strong admonition to the Pharisees by Jesus himself in verse 23 to “practice tithing without neglecting justice, mercy and faithfulness”? Mosaic law specified that a tenth of all that one had was to be given to the Lord for the ongoing work of God through the Levites and the priests.<sup>49</sup> Jesus does NOT tell them to abandon the tithe, but they (and we) should remember to keep sight of the larger picture, not “straining a gnat while swallowing a camel” (Matthew 23:24). This is a powerful example of hypocrisy demonstrated in inconsistency in our personal behavior, where we focus on the shore of religion, instead of the ocean of fundamental truth.<sup>50</sup>

Matthew 25:14-30: This parable of Jesus is often quoted when discussing stewardship topics. A master calls on his servants to notify them of his temporary departure, while entrusting them with his wealth. He gives three different “stewards” bags of gold, “according to the ability” of each of them. Then the master charges them to be faithful managers of his possessions, warning them of his return at a later day where they will have to give an accounting for how they handled his money.

What a powerful ending to the parable which ends with the words we all want to hear from Jesus: “Well done, good and faithful servant”, which were offered to two out

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<sup>49</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew: NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 753.

<sup>50</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 754.

of the three managers. What does this mean to us as stewards? Simply put, faithful responsibility in living up to one's potential and giftedness is expected and joyfully rewarded.<sup>51</sup> True disciples of Jesus exhibit faithfulness in their daily walk, even when it appears the Master is not present, and persevere in diligently putting our God-given talents to work for His glory. The more responsibly we carry out the Master's affairs, the more responsibility we are given.<sup>52</sup> Not that our reward for good work is more work; rather, excellent work is rewarded with even more meaningful work to achieve the purposes of God.

Luke 11:37-54: Already mentioned in the book of Matthew but coming from the pen of a different author with a different life perspective, Doctor Luke writes again about Jesus' scathing rebuke of the Pharisees, not releasing them from the tithe, but charging them to go further, above and beyond just 10%. The Lord calls to attention another example of how the Pharisees have fallen into a degenerate form of "the rules of religion" while taking their eyes off key "right relationships."<sup>53</sup> They were right to be faithful in the giving of their tithes, but they must not allow their religion to neglect the piety of serving their fellow man.<sup>54</sup>

One Pharisee responds to Jesus by stating the words of Jesus were insulting to them as leaders. Jesus does not see it fit to respond to the rebuke, he simply continues on about their shortcomings. The opposition to Jesus grew fiercely from this point on.

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<sup>51</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 807.

<sup>52</sup> Wilkins, *Matthew*, 818.

<sup>53</sup> Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.M.B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1993), 340.

<sup>54</sup> Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 342.

Perhaps when touching on the topic of their pocket-books, he revealed the stingy condition of their hearts. They did not appreciate having their miserly conditions exposed. I would suppose neither would have we. Being tightfisted is selfish and difficult to remedy. Nevertheless, we should seek to grow in generosity.

Luke 12:48: This parable of Jesus implores us to be watchful, preparing ourselves for the return of the Master. We need to be found ready, under the certainty of his return, although at a time that will be unexpected.

No one, especially in America, should ignore the words “to whom much is given, much is required,” because of its eternal consequences. Will we have to give an account of how we handled God’s time, talents, and treasures? Evidently, yes. We are to be “heavenly minded” and “faithful in our performance of daily living” to the glory of God, proving our “treasure really is in heaven.”<sup>55</sup>

Additionally, it is necessary to flesh out four additional applicable stewardship verses contained in other books of the Bible. To reiterate, commentaries are being used to ensure the reader of this dissertation is not being led astray by the opinions of just one individual. It is wiser to rely on scholarly Bible commentaries with editorial boards and peer review processes.

Philippians 4:12-13: The Apostle Paul expresses gratitude for the gifts of the people from Philippi to his missionary ministries. He appreciates their concern for his well-being. He explains how he has been both “in need” and “in plenty” in his past, but has learned the secret of contentment.

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<sup>55</sup> Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, 362-363.



What a challenge to be “content in all circumstances,” especially for those of us in the Western part of the world where material resources are so plentiful, leaving us in a constant desire to accumulate more. Joy is not dependent on the alleviation of physical discomforts or on how many toys a person has. Rather, joy comes from God and is reliant on Him, as opposed to focusing on our own comfort or personal circumstances. The station of “contentment” may only be accomplished by remembering that “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength...My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”<sup>56</sup> It is mind-bending to realize in Christ we are rich even if we are mired in financial poverty. As children, most of us would not easily buy this principle, but it is true; we are not necessarily more blessed if we experience affluence, as wealth is deceptive.<sup>57</sup>

2 Corinthians 9:6-7: Perhaps the most quoted stewardship verses in all of scripture, especially as they are perceived as being the most graceful in regard to how much we are to give to others, as in a specific amount of expectation. Breaking the notion of giving causing resentment in the heart of a giver, he tears down any generosity that is given with compulsion, for in it is unpleasing reluctance.

A two-pronged challenge is issued in this passage to “sow generously” and be a “cheerful giver.” The point is this, to give is to sow!<sup>58</sup> What is given is not lost, so give generously, so that joy may be reaped generously. In fact, cheerful giving exposes the

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<sup>56</sup> Frank Thielman, *Philippians: The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), Philippians 4:10-23.

<sup>57</sup> Thielman, *Philippians*, Philippians 4:10-23.

<sup>58</sup> Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Introd., Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 328.

true heart, which pleases God. To share with others under compulsion is no act of Christian giving at all.<sup>59</sup> Our object is to be cheerful in giving, not cheerful in getting. Amen!

Malachi 3:10: God has a two-way conversation with his people in this 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Malachi. In verse 7, he mentions the powerful charge to “return to me” and then adds the promise “and I will return to you”. The Israelites ask, as if in disbelief, how they are to return to him. One may almost picture their surprise, when God says they need to stop robbing him.

The admonition of “robbing God with our tithes and offerings” is difficult to swallow, but, realistically, is stunningly true for all of us who have strayed. Half-heartedness in giving the tithe means we have failed the “test” of our heart in relationship to God.<sup>60</sup> This is a trust issue between us and God; when we tithe, we say, “We believe your promise that you will supply all our needs, including both the physical and spiritual.” Without this trust, we are “cursed” in our false reliance on ourselves, especially when we don’t feel we have done anything wrong.<sup>61</sup> To put it mildly, God is always the provider, while our responsibility is to focus on Him in gratitude by returning to him that which is already His, demonstrating our trust and thankfulness.<sup>62</sup>

Psalms 24:1: King David wrote masses of psalms to address many of life’s tough issues. Sometimes they appear to be pointed backward at only himself, but thankfully we

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<sup>59</sup> Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 330.

<sup>60</sup> David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 285.

<sup>61</sup> Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 286.

<sup>62</sup> Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, 287.

are able to apply them to our daily lives even today. In this writing, he talks at length about approaching God “with clean hands and a pure heart” which would most certainly be revealed in how we handle the resources he has trusted us with.

In stating “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it,” the writer of the Psalm understands whose sovereignty reigns on planet earth, and it is not ours.<sup>63</sup> We are called to put all of “our” possessions, abilities, and opportunities to work for the kingdom of God, which helps us recognize the eternal value of everything God has entrusted us with.<sup>64</sup> There is a responsibility of humankind to realize apparent prosperity with wealth carries tremendous responsibilities and potential danger. If we think we own everything, we are deceived and are not going to be able to experience spiritual health as God intended, selfishly hoarding things that will be ultimately taken from us and shared with someone else.

Finally, in further discussing a chief stewardship text, Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Sower, it is powerfully shared,

Often a well-to-do householder had a slave who was a “manager” or “steward” managing his estate. Absentee landowners were common, especially if they owned other estates at great distances...the connotation connected to this history is that believers must make the wisest use of all that the Lord has entrusted to them, to make it count for Him; they must never take their stewardships for granted.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Robin Keeley, *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 264.

<sup>64</sup> Keeley, *Eerdmans' Handbook to Christian Belief*, 265.

<sup>65</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 116-117.

*The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, which is an indispensable resource for all students of the Bible in that it provides the cultural background of every verse in the New Testament, has been used to illustrate this most recent point.

One servant, out of three, fears for his own safety and hides the money in a hole in the ground. As if patting himself on the back for maintaining the same level he was trusted with, he gleefully hands it back to the master, hoping to get positive reinforcement. The master explains he expected the value of the money to grow, so teaching the worthless servant a difficult lesson. We must not rest on lame excuses, God lovingly expects us to be busy cultivating hearts that steward well the responsibilities we have all been assigned, not taking for granted his generosity, which must be passed on to others.

### **Review and a Bridge into the Debate on Tithing**

1. Psalm 24:1 says, “God owns everything!” This is the paramount foundation of biblical stewardship. Until a person accepts this truth, nothing else regarding this topic will make sense.
2. Over 2,400 verses in the Bible, including a full two-thirds of Jesus’ parables, relate to the topic of stewardship.<sup>66</sup>
3. Trust and contentment are important concepts to consider when discussing this topic.

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<sup>66</sup> Larry Burkett, *Dollars and Sense: What the Bible Says about You and Your Money* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1993), inside cover.

4. According to Nehemiah 10:35, the tithe is a “firstfruit” to the “storehouse,” where we return to God that which is already His.
5. In Luke 11:42 and Matthew 23:23, Jesus carries the tithing principle into the New Testament. Paul also teaches (in 2 Corinthians 9:7) that cheerful giving is rewarded and very well could be larger than simply 10%.
6. Only 33% of pastors in The Evangelical Church disciple regularly on stewardship principles, but nearly 100% believe God owns everything and we should be found faithful as temporary stewards of all God has entrusted us with.<sup>67</sup>
7. There is a strong biblical basis for “generosity” in various scriptures, as supported by several key Bible commentaries.

As previously alluded to, there is some debate on whether Christians today are still commanded to tithe. Chapter 3 will not only dig deeper into several historical perspectives of stewardship, both inside and outside of The Evangelical Church, but will also unveil differing viewpoints of tithing.

The project will attempt to build a bridge between these discussions to highlight wise Christian living practices as they relate to our time, talents, and treasures. The Bible is culturally relevant for discovering how we should live out the mandates of generosity, including the faithful managing of our resources, especially in sharing with our local church.

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<sup>67</sup> Survey conducted in 2014 by this author while serving as Stewardship Director for the denomination of the Evangelical Church. One of several surveys commissioned by The Evangelical Church during the study time period of 2014 to 2018.

As we carry on, it is crucial to be reminded God does not change and His will for us does not change, either. We *must* continue to grow in this area of being faithful managers because these timeless principles actually are intended for our good, and we will be more mature in our walk with Jesus when we apply them to our daily lives, allowing our hearts to be in the right place.<sup>68</sup> As Ron Blue used to famously say, “Finances are a spiritual indicator.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> David Alexander and Pat Alexander, *Eerdmans Concise Bible Handbook* (Minneapolis, MN: Worldwide, 1973), 11.

<sup>69</sup> Ron Blue and Jeremy White, *The New Master Your Money: A Step-by-Step Plan for Gaining and Enjoying Financial Freedom* (Chicago: Moody, 2004), xi.

## Addendum 1, Chapter 2:

### Stewardship Lessons from King Solomon in Ecclesiastes

“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.”  
 What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?  
 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.  
 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.  
 The wind blows to the south and turns to the north;  
 round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.  
 All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full.  
 To the place the streams come from, there they return again.  
 All things are wearisome, more than one can say.  
 The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.  
 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again;  
 there is nothing new under the sun. **1:1-9**

I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure.  
 My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.  
 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve,  
 everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.  
**2:10-11**

I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. **2:18-19, 26**

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:  
 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build,  
 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,  
 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain,  
 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away,  
 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,  
 a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.” **3:1-8**

What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. **3:9-12**

Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind. There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. Better a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to heed a warning. **4:6, 8, 13**

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep. I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit. Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb and as everyone comes, so they depart. **5:10-14**

Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. **5:19**

I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil. A man may have a hundred children and live many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he cannot enjoy his prosperity and does not receive proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he... Though it never saw the sun or knew anything, it has more rest than does that man— even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place? **6:1-6**

Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun. Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it. **7:11-12**

I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all. **9:9-11**

Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones. Through laziness, the rafters sag; because of idle hands, the house leaks. A feast is made for laughter, wine makes life merry, and money is the answer for everything. **10:6, 18-19**

Invest in seven ventures, yes, in eight; you do not know what disaster may come upon the land. **11:2**

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. **12:14**



### CHAPTER 3: STEWARDSHIP PERSPECTIVES

*13 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”*

*14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.*

*15 He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.”*

#### ***Luke 16:13-15***

In Malachi 3:8, there is a marked differentiation between “tithes” and “offerings,” but many Christians do not understand or notice the difference. In the NIV, this verse states, “‘Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.’ But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’ ‘In tithes and offerings.’” If they were the same thing, only one of the words would have been needed, but in the original Hebrew language, the words “maasar,” for tithe, and “minchah” for offerings,<sup>1</sup> are different words with different meanings.

In stewardship seminars taught throughout The Evangelical Church, congregations learned a tithe is a tenth (10%) of the “increase” of our income. If someone is making an hourly wage or monthly salary, everything is an “increase,” but if a farmer invests money in seed, gas, and fertilizer, he or she may deduct their expenses before calculating what their “increase” was after the sale of their crop. A biblical tithe is a

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<sup>1</sup> Elias E. Hildago, “Tithes and Offerings,” Shalompeace.com, 2016, <https://www.shalompeace.com/tithes.html>. This Jewish-based resource is respected because of its obvious connections to the history of the Old Testament, not to mention its built-in credibility, as opposed to an outside Israel or American source.

“firstfruit,” meaning it is not a leftover. “Firstfruits” are the very best we have to offer, before we do anything else with our resources. If we give from the leftovers, we do not trust God to provide all our needs. A tithe is also given to the “storehouse,” which is the place where one is fed spiritually. In the New Testament, the “storehouse” is the church, but in Old Testament times it was the tent, tabernacle, or Solomon’s temple. Most importantly, the tithe is an undesignated and unrestricted gift, with no strings on spending attached. Once given, the tithe may not be held onto by the giver with a clenched fist; rather, it is given with an open hand and no further control of the gift exists. Many people ask, “Should I tithe before (on the gross) or after (on the net) taxes and expenses on my income?” Not to get too legalistic, God is searching the motives of the heart, not a person’s definition of what the “increase” is. As previously mentioned, God loves a cheerful giver, not one who gives under compulsion.<sup>2</sup>

While studying for the ministry, we are taught by our mentors that offerings are restricted and/or designated gifts to missions, building funds, food banks, pregnancy centers, etc. They usually reach outside the church walls. They are gifts over and above the 10% tithe. There is no designation to the amount of this gift. Obviously, they may be personally directed as to what their intended purpose is; therefore, the giver may assume some control as to their usage. We do not have to “prove what is acceptable to the Lord,” as Ephesians 5:10 suggests; we only must give willingly with proper motives, not expecting anything in return.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Hildago, “Tithes and Offerings.”

What percentage of people give to their local church with a tithe? Barna Research reports, “Our research shows that 5% of adults qualify as having tithed—giving 10% or more of their annual income to a church or non-profit organization. Among those identifying as ‘born again’ the tithing rate was 12%, which is on par for the past decade.”<sup>4</sup> Not a huge difference between simple “attenders” and those experiencing being “born again,” and seemingly sub-par in comparison to scriptural teachings of a 10% tithe for all followers of Christ.

Pushpay, a leading U.S. mobile and digital giving provider, most often used in our denomination by our larger churches, says, “The state of church giving is in transition. The Giving Institute said in a 2015 press release that while charitable giving is up in the United States, the percentage of that giving going to churches has dropped from 53 percent in 1987 to 32 percent in 2015. Churches everywhere are feeling this dramatic slide.”<sup>5</sup> Evidently, the market share of church giving compared to overall giving is shrinking precipitously.

Startlingly, depending which survey is cited, the average American church attendee donates somewhere between 2% and 4% of their income to their local church,<sup>6</sup> obviously far short of the 10% standard. Furthermore, total giving to all charitable causes

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<sup>4</sup> George Barna, “American Donor Trends,” Barna Group, June 3, 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trends/>. Barna is a well-known and widely circulated source of data in the Christian world.

<sup>5</sup> Sharon Bond, “Church Giving Statistics, 2018 Edition,” Pushpay, July 8, 2019, <https://pushpay.com/blog/church-giving-statistics/>. Any number of dozens of surveys mirror these giving statistics, so as a representative of all these surveys, this one from Pushpay was chosen.

<sup>6</sup> Giving USA Foundation, “Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2014,” 2015. Unfortunately, information lags behind by two to three years.

is not significantly different for those outside the church and those inside.<sup>7</sup> How can this be? It is almost unthinkable that Christians are not more generous than the rest of the world, even after listening to and reading so many Bible teachings on generosity!

Pushpay also cites the following giving statistics that are troublesome to many pastors: “On average, today Christians give 2.5% of their income to churches, but during the Great Depression, they gave 3.3%. Also, people with a salary of less than \$20,000 are eight times more likely to give than someone who makes \$75,000.”<sup>8</sup> It’s somewhat surprising those who make less are more likely to give. One might have assumed the opposite.

NonProfitsSource adds several interesting thoughts, especially to this research dissertation: “8 out of 10 of adults who give to churches have zero credit debt” [Dave Ramsey has been saying this for years, so he advocates to teach people how to get out of debt, then they will give more]; “When surveyed, 17% of Americans state that they regularly tithe” [does not correlate to actual giving statistics and is seemingly not realistic]; “The average giving by adults who attend US Protestant churches is about \$17 a week” [probably far less than what is spent on fancy coffee], and “37% of regular church attendees and Evangelicals don’t give money to church at all” [which means over one-third of giving records are zero].<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Barna, “American Donor Trends.”

<sup>8</sup> Bond, “Church Giving Statistics, 2018 Edition.”

<sup>9</sup> Jason Firch, “2018 Online Giving Statistics, Trends & Data: The Ultimate List of Giving Stats,” Nonprofits Source, 2019, <https://nonprofitssource.com/online-giving-statistics/>. This resource gathers data from hundreds of other sources and displays the information in one central location that is easy to reference.

Fortunately, NonProfitsSource adds these: “77% of those who tithe give 11%–20% or more of their income, far more than the baseline of 10%, and 7 out of 10 titers do so based on their gross and not their net income.”<sup>10</sup> Finally, seemingly a bit of good news in the mix!

Interestingly, giving to religious causes is on the decline as a piece of the larger giving picture. Giving USA is the most widely recognized annual report keeping tabs on charitable giving. Their landmark 2014 study in conjunction with the Lilly Foundation shows that religion remains the largest share of all charitable giving, with one-third market share (32 percent) of all charitable giving going toward religious causes.

While the growth of religious giving slightly outpaced inflation this past year, its growth was much slower than the overall growth of philanthropy in the U.S. When taking a longer view over the past several decades, the religious sector’s percentage of total giving has continued to shrink. In the 1980s, over 50 percent of all giving was religious giving, down now to one-third today.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, Giving USA has this to add, “Giving to religion’s decline over time as a share of the total reflects that fewer Americans currently identify with a religion, attend worship services or give to houses of worship. These effects have been noted among the Baby Boomer generation; younger age groups appear to be following the same path.”<sup>12</sup> These are eye-opening words for anyone with a pastor shepherd’s heart, causing concern for future church funding.

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<sup>10</sup> Firch, “2018 Online Giving Statistics, Trends & Data.”

<sup>11</sup> David P. King, “Millennials, Faith and Philanthropy: Who Will be Transformed?” *Bridge/Work* 1 no. 1, Article 2 (2015), <http://scholar.valpo.edu/ilasbw/vol1/iss1/2>.

<sup>12</sup> Giving USA Foundation.

## The Evangelical Church

There exist several historical perspectives of stewardship, both inside and outside of The Evangelical Church. Foreign missionaries add viewpoints that challenge the American perspective of stewardship, which seems to focus almost entirely on financial resources. However, when defined as the faithful management of time, talents, and treasures, the biblical basis of stewardship travels across cultural boundaries. The principles of stewardship should not change based on physical location. Rather, these principles of being “found faithful” are consistent, whether on our mission field of Bolivia, or to the capital city of Liberia, or rural churches in Montana, and all places in between. However, while the principles are the same regardless of one’s address, the application may be different, especially considering differing contexts of a community on the island of Guam compared to the inner city of Tokyo. One might tithe an actual chicken or one-tenth of their potato crop, where another might tithe on cash in their bank account after depositing a hard-earned paycheck.

Paragraph 211 of *The Discipline of the Evangelical Church* was quoted in Chapter One of this dissertation regarding the practice of stewardship. In a different paragraph (425), it adds this requirement to become an official “member” of a local church:

Every member of the Church should study the principles of Christian stewardship, and dedicate himself, his time, his talents and his substance [treasures] to God and the advancement of His kingdom. In recognition of God’s ownership, he should practice systematic and proportionate giving and regard the tithe as the basic minimum standard of giving, as dictated in Malachi 3:8-12 and 1 Corinthians 16:2. He should regard Christian liberality [generosity] as a privilege and sacred duty and freely give of his substance [resources] for the spreading of the Gospel at home and abroad, for the maintenance of the local church and for the support of

the agencies and enterprises of the denomination, as referenced in Deuteronomy 16:17, Matthew 6:3 and Romans 12:8.<sup>13</sup>

Most pastors in our denomination understand the foundation of stewardship and its importance in aiding the spreading the Gospel, supporting the local church, and providing various ministries outside the four walls of our church buildings. It is assumed, maybe wrongly, that the average church attender understands their personal involvement in stewardship is vital to sustaining the ministries of their church body. Without the generosity of the people in the pews with their time, talents, and treasures, the ministry is non-enduring.

In Paragraph 701, *The Discipline* further states that in discipling children, stewardship is one of the basic tenants a church should teach the younger generation. It states:

Every Local Church, under the leadership of the Senior Minister, shall structure a program of ministry especially designed to reach, teach and train children. This program shall focus chiefly on the knowledge of biblical truth relating to but not limited to one's relationship to God, family, church, community, missions, *stewardship*, Christian social concerns, and evangelism. This instruction shall include the doctrines of the Christian religion, the meaning of the Christian life, the history of the Christian church at large, and the history, faith and order, life and practice of The Evangelical Church.<sup>14</sup>

No known pastor in our denomination disagrees with the historical importance for teaching solid biblical stewardship practices. Paragraph 712 even establishes a “Stewardship Committee” in every local church, with the mandate “to encourage biblical stewardship among the members of the congregation and endeavor to implement

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<sup>13</sup> Brian Eckhardt, “The Discipline of the Evangelical Church,” Western Conference of the Evangelical Church, 2014, <http://www.westconf.net/discipline--rituals--policies--procedures.html>. A new version of the Discipline occurs every four years, but the 2018 version will mirror 2014 for these sections.

<sup>14</sup> *The Discipline*, Paragraph 211. Emphasis added.

stewardship principles for the local church that are in accordance with biblical stewardship principles.”<sup>15</sup> Each Conference in The Evangelical Church, and the denomination itself, is to also establish stewardship committees not only to build its annual budget, but also to “promote the disciplines of prayer, Bible study, evangelism and stewardship in the lives of the people of the churches of the Annual Conference.”<sup>16</sup>

The Evangelical Church is part of the Global Wesleyan Alliance (GWA), which includes 15 holiness denominations who partner together for a variety of reasons, including discipleship in wise stewardship. The GWA’s stated purpose is to “collaboratively fulfill Christ’s mission through pooling resources, sharing best practices, mutual recognition of ministerial credentials, joint resource development and publishing, and ministerial job placement.”<sup>17</sup> Their mission statement values “the promotion of holiness, discipleship, church healing, church multiplication, leadership development, prayer, networking, and issues of mutual concern,”<sup>18</sup> including the practicing of faithful stewardship.

This means biblical stewardship practices of faithfully managing God’s resources are currently agreed upon by the following denominations associated with The Evangelical Church:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The Discipline*, Paragraph 712.

<sup>16</sup> *The Discipline*, Paragraph 864.

<sup>17</sup> Ronald V. Duncan, “About Us,” Wesleyanalliance.com, 2016, <https://www.wesleyanalliance.com/about-us/>. Ron Duncan is the only paid employee of the Global Wesleyan Alliance, and serves part-time in his role.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald V. Duncan, “Global Wesleyan Alliance Bylaws,” Wesleyanalliance.com, 2014. <https://www.wesleyanalliance.com/media/docs/GWA-Bylaws.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Duncan, “Global Wesleyan Alliance Bylaws.” The Nararene Church is the largest denomination in the GWA, followed by the Wesleyan Church. The Evangelical Church is a small denomination, with only 120 churches in America, 250 in Bolivia, and dozens of others in Liberia, Fiji, Japan, and India.



Association of Independent Methodists  
 Brethren in Christ, USA  
 Church of Christ Holiness USA  
 Church of God (Anderson)  
 Church of the Nazarene  
 Churches of Christ in Christian Union  
 Congregational Methodist Church  
 Evangelical Methodist Church  
 Free Methodist Church  
 International Fellowship of Bible Churches  
 Missionary Church  
 Nazarene Church  
 Salvation Army  
 The Methodist Protestant Church  
 The Wesleyan Church

But not all members of the GWA interpret the commandment of the “tithe” equally. Some say it was only an Old Testament law, others say the New Testament Christian now lives under grace, while a portion emphatically hold to the 10% tithe standard. Still others would teach their givers to share beyond the 10% threshold when possible.

While most, if not all, major Christian denominations support biblical stewardship, it is necessary to dissect deeper the historical roots of the tithe. Let’s look at a longer-standing group of believers, larger than just the denomination of The Evangelical Church.

### **Differing Viewpoints Regarding Tithing**

The Evangelical Church is part of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). The NAE is credited with many groundbreaking initiatives in the past century. For instance, the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) was the first of many related service agencies the NAE would charter with a particular purpose in mind. The NAE then created two world-changing and task-specific commissions in 1944—the Chaplains

Commission, to assist evangelical chaplains in the military, and the War Relief Commission. These Commissions would eventually become a major global ministry known as World Relief, NAE's humanitarian assistance arm. The following year, the NAE created the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association, later called Missio Nexus, the largest missionary association in the world.<sup>20</sup> The NAE represents more than 45,000 local churches from 40 different denominations and serves a constituency of millions.<sup>21</sup> About the issue of stewardship, this larger body of believers states,

Recognizing the great challenge that God has given us in the stewardship of the earth, the National Association of Evangelicals calls upon its churches, denominations, mission agencies and educational institutions to examine their goals and procedures in light of the biblical injunction to be good stewards. We call upon individual Christians as well to examine the ways in which they live and use the resources of time, talent, mind, body, thoughts and finances over which they have control. May the Church at large be a model of the ways and values of God in its stewardship of God's resources. True Christian stewardship is recognizing and living out a commitment to the truth that "The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it."<sup>22</sup>

Where might The Evangelical Church and the NAE initially have received their historical definitions of stewardship? The University of Exeter in the United Kingdom states that stewardship principles came from the earliest teachings in Catholicism, where human beings are made in the "image of God (Imago Dei)" and have been granted "dominion" over the whole earth, while holding "responsibility of stewarding the created

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<sup>20</sup> Leith Anderson, "The National Association of Evangelicals History," nae.net, 2014, <https://www.nae.net/about-nae/history/>. Leith Anderson has led this organization twice, most recently when taking over for famous Pastor Colorado Springs pastor Ted Haggard, who had a moral failure and stepped down amid great controversy.

<sup>21</sup> LeithAnderson, "About The National Association of Evangelicals," nae.net, 2014, <https://www.nae.net/about-nae/>.

<sup>22</sup> Leith Anderson, "Stewardship," nae.net, 2014, <https://www.nae.net/stewardship/>.

world.”<sup>23</sup> The University further states, “The oldest and most influential source for the idea that humans are meant to be stewards of the earth is the Bible, and in particular the opening chapters of the book of Genesis (in particular verses 26 and 28 of chapter 1) where the basis on which the whole discussion of stewardship ultimately rests.”<sup>24</sup>

The roots of Lutheranism also include stewardship tenants. The Luther Seminary includes this strong stewardship statement:

The German Lutheran bishop, Hanns Lilje (1899-1977), said “To know that with all that we are and all that we have we are God’s stewards is the answer to a particularly deep yearning of the time in which we live, namely the yearning for a *vita nova*, a complete renewal of our life. Here the insights of our brethren in the faith have in the perspective of church history, something like the same significance as the lessons which the German Lutheran Reformation has taught us about justification by grace.”<sup>25</sup>

Comparing stewardship with justification by grace is powerful, indeed.

However, we still must delve into the deeper issue of tithing as a part of stewardship. What are the historical implications of the tithe? Is the tithe widely accepted in its historical context? The simple answer is yes, but with a wide spectrum of interpretations historically.

For instance, Non-Profit Quarterly states, “Evangelicals are more generous than mainliners, Protestants are more generous than Catholics, Christians are more generous

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<sup>23</sup> David Horrell, “Catholic Teaching Explored,” University of Exeter, 2019, <https://humanities.exeter.ac.uk/theology/research/projects/beyondstewardship/catholic/>.

<sup>24</sup> David Horrell, “Catholic Teaching Explored.”

<sup>25</sup> Walter Sundberg, “An Address on Stewardship,” Luther Seminary, 2005, <https://www.luthersem.edu/stewardship/default.aspx?m=6667&post=3952>.

than secularists, and Americans are far more generous than everybody else in the world.”<sup>26</sup> The Quarterly continues with,

Should Christians give 10 percent? Ron Sider, author of *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, says that a current average personal giving rate of only 2 or 3 percent “is not just stinginess, it is biblical disobedience—blatant sin.” He calls for giving 10, 15, 25, or even 35 percent to kingdom work, suggesting that giving double a tithe annually would not leave many people anywhere near poverty.<sup>27</sup>

William Barclay of the Gospel Coalition and the Reformed Theological Seminary writes,

Does the Bible command Christians to tithe and, if so, is the baseline 10 percent as expressed in the Old Testament? I believe the answer is yes. The tithe is essential for holiness, vital for the ongoing work of Christ’s church, and required for receiving God’s blessing. My argument, in a nutshell, is this: The requirement to tithe preceded the Mosaic law, was codified in it with ceremonial aspects added, and was affirmed by Jesus as binding on his followers. Furthermore, the words “ought to tithe” mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 23 and Luke 11 are rightly indicative of a necessity.<sup>28</sup>

In a side-by-side article on the Gospel Coalition website, a divergent perspective was offered, stating the tithe is not required under the new covenant proclaimed by Jesus.

Professor Thomas Schreiner of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary claims this nonetheless:

Even though tithing isn’t required today, it does not follow that believers should hoard their possessions. We are commanded to support those who preach the gospel in Matthew 10:10, Luke 10:7, 1 Timothy 5:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 9:6-14. And while we should enjoy the good things God gives us, we are also called

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<sup>26</sup> Rick Cohen, “What Denominations Take Tithing Most Seriously?” Nonprofit Quarterly, January 31, 2011, <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/to-tithe-or-not-to-tithe-that-is-the-question/>.

<sup>27</sup> Cohen, “What Denominations Take Tithing Most Seriously?” Notice the strong reference to Jesus carrying the commandment of the tithe into the New Testament while talking to the Pharisees.

<sup>28</sup> William Barclay, “The Bible Commands Christians to Tithe,” The Gospel Coalition (TGC), October 31, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/bible-commands-christians-to-tithe/>. Notice the strong reference to Jesus carrying the commandment of the tithe into the New Testament while talking to the Pharisees.

to be generous to those in need as taught in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. Wealth can so easily become an idol, leading us to abandon the Lord.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, another study conducted by the NAE declares, “The Old Testament called for multiple tithes, sort of combining government taxes with religious stewardship. Many churches later adopted 10 percent as the standard.”<sup>30</sup> According to Leith Anderson, NAE President, “Since there is such a strong evangelical tradition of tithing I was a little surprised that a majority (just over 50%) of our evangelical leaders say the tithe system of the Old Testament does not carry over to the New Testament or to us.”<sup>31</sup> Anderson continues by stressing this doesn’t release Christians from giving. While tithing may not be “required” today, some say that Christian generosity will at a minimum reflect the Old Testament requirements of the law and should, in fact, greatly exceed it.<sup>32</sup>

This brings to mind the discussion of a word often used in describing generosity. The conversation is “proportional” giving. For some, this means gifts will not be equal in amount or even necessarily equal in percentage but will be certainly be equal in sacrifice. The widow’s mite (Mark 12 and Luke 31) is the consummate Bible story about “sacrificial giving” and suggests someone who is wealthy should give significant gifts “in proportion to their income,” while others who may not be wealthy will absolutely do the same. Mentioned only one time in scripture, proportional giving is taken from

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Schreiner, “7 Reasons Christians Are Not Required to Tithe,” The Gospel Coalition (TGC), October 31, 2017, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/7-reasons-christians-not-required-to-tithe/>. It is noted this author makes great points, but perhaps makes small of Jesus saying “Do not neglect” the former (tithing).

<sup>30</sup> Schreiner, “7 Reasons Christians Are Not Required to Tithe.”

<sup>31</sup> Leith Anderson, “Evangelical Leaders Say Tithe Not Required,” [nae.net](http://nae.net), February 2011, <https://www.nae.net/evangelical-leaders-say-tithe-not-required/>.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, “Evangelical Leaders Say Tithe not Required.”

1 Corinthians 16:2, which states, “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.” This method of giving is regular and systematic, and directly correlates to one’s income, but is not the same for every person.

Though not an evangelical denomination, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, often referred to as the Mormon Church, strictly enforces the tithe. Tithing, according to their organization, is a debt owed to God. No matter their financial situation, every member is expected to pay that debt. Failure to do so is the same as robbing God and is deserving of God’s curse. This rigid form of giving reeks of legalism; a family must meet with their bishop regularly to answer questions about their personal finances. It is also an entrance fee—only full-tithe-paying members are allowed to enter the Church’s most holy place, the temple, and participate in important saving ordinances.<sup>33</sup>

The United Methodist Church, with over 7 million members, has this official stance on tithing: “Each annual [regional] conference, as part of its responsibilities in the area of stewardship, is to educate the local church that tithing is the minimum goal of giving in The United Methodist Church.”<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to hear of the “minimum” giving of 10%, as most major denominations do not take such a stance.

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<sup>33</sup> Marion Romney, “Tithing in the LDS Church,” mormanthink.com, 2016, <http://www.mormonthink.com/tithing.htm>. Again, some will not appreciate even mentioning the LDS link, as they are considered by many to be a cult. However, they are used as an example to illustrate the far right of the spectrum on whether tithing is a requirement for today’s Christians.

<sup>34</sup> Kenneth Carter, “What Does the United Methodist Church Say about Tithing?” The United Methodist Church, June 5, 2013, <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-does-the-church-say-about-tithing>. Interestingly, the Evangelical Church did not join the United Methodist Church in 1968 when there was a merger with the Methodist Church and our predecessor denomination called the Evangelical United Brethren.

The Southern Baptists, who constitute the largest Protestant denomination in America at over 16 million members, have this to say about tithing:

WHEREAS, biblical stewardship is a generous response of loving obedience that constitutes an essential part of our worship of God (2 Corinthians 9:6–7); and WHEREAS, tithing predates the Law of Moses (Genesis 14:20; 28:22; Hebrews 7:2) and is affirmed in the Old Testament (Numbers 18: 21–24) as well as in the New Testament (Luke 11:42); and WHEREAS, the scripture equates failure to tithe with robbing God (Malachi 3:8); and WHEREAS, Christ affirmed the tithe (Matthew 23:23); and WHEREAS, proportional giving of at least a tithe is expected by God throughout scripture (Numbers 18:21–24; 1 Corinthians 16:1–2; Hebrews 7:2); BE IT RESOLVED, the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention...exhort all Southern Baptists to tithe cheerfully and give sacrificially as good stewards of God’s blessings to their local churches.<sup>35</sup>

The Catholic Church, with over 68 million members, officially the largest of all religious groups in the United States, avoids taking a hard stance on tithing by stating,

Although the Church teaches that offering some form of material support to the Church is obligatory for all Catholic adults who are able to do so, it doesn’t specify what percent of one’s income should be given. Remember, tithing was an Old Testament obligation that was incumbent on the Jews under the Law of Moses. Christians are dispensed from the obligation of tithing ten percent of their incomes, but not from the obligation to help the Church.<sup>36</sup>

With all this being said, there obviously is a difference in opinion regarding the “commandment” of tithing. Succinctly, no dissertation will be able to completely solve the disagreements. In finding common ground, nearly everyone would agree Christians should be generous, and all would “recommend” the sharing of our resources with those around us. Being generous with time, talents, and treasures is strongly supported by all major denominations.

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<sup>35</sup> Adrian Rogers, “On Tithing, Stewardship and the Cooperative Program,” Southern Baptist Convention, 2013, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1234/on-tithing-stewardship-and-the-cooperative-program>.

<sup>36</sup> Karl Keating, “What Is the Church's Position on Tithing,” Catholic Answers, 2019, <https://www.catholic.com/qa/what-is-the-churchs-position-on-tithing>.

## Financial Integrity and Trust

Before Dave Ramsey, churches across America looked to several Christian financial experts for resources on biblical stewardship principles. The list includes spiritual giants like Ron Blue, Larry Burkett, Howard Dayton, Brian Kluth, Randy Alcorn, and John Maxwell. All are part of this dissertation's working bibliography. Dave Ramsey even gives credit to being mentored by and talks of accountability to Larry Burkett for helping formulate his principles on stewardship.<sup>37</sup>

In The Evangelical Church, Dave Ramsey, by far, has the highest (75%) majority of our church engagement in teaching biblical stewardship principles.<sup>38</sup> Larry Burkett (with his protégé Howard Dayton at Crown Financial) comes in a distant second. Both appear to have earned our trust as a denomination, as they are used extensively across the country.

What organization best provides accountability for finances in church circles across America today? We seem to rely on these trusted individuals in our denomination, but who is holding them accountable? There is a company serving in this capacity, although not perfect, who appear to be experiencing success in helping live out Luke 16:11, where it says, "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"

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<sup>37</sup> Dave Ramsey, "The Billionaire and the Money Mentor," *Dave Ramsey* (blog), accessed December 4, 2018, <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/the-billionaire-and-the-money-mentor/>. Interestingly, while visiting the headquarters of Ramsey Solutions, it was explained that there was no animosity or competition between Dave Ramsey's organization with Crown Financial, which was Larry Burkett's company.

<sup>38</sup> Dave Ramsey, "Pastors on FPU: It's Working," Stewardship Central, 2017, <https://www.stewardshipcentral.org/posts/pastors-on-fpu-its-working>.



The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) is a highly respected resource for building trust between donors and churches, seeking integrity in the teaching of handling resources biblically. Founded in 1979 in response to growing public and political concern over an increase in questionable fundraising practices in the nonprofit world, ECFA provides accreditation to leading Christian religious organizations that faithfully demonstrate compliance with established standards for financial accountability and fundraising. Members include Christian ministries, denominations, churches, educational institutions, and other tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organizations.<sup>39</sup>

Businesses have the Better Business Bureau; ECFA was formed to be what is called the “Christian Better Business Bureau” and serves many thousands of organizations nationwide, teaching these “Seven Standards of Responsible Stewardship”:<sup>40</sup>

- Standard 1 – Evangelical Doctrine
- Standard 2 – Governance
- Standard 3 – Financial Oversight
- Standard 4 – Use of Resources and Compliance with Laws
- Standard 5 – Transparency
- Standard 6 – Compensation-Setting and Related-Party Transactions
- Standard 7 – Stewardship of Charitable Gifts

Ramsey Solutions is a for-profit business; thus, they are not a member of the ECFA. However, Dave Ramsey certainly encourages financial accountability and his websites cite the ECFA for accountability support. Therefore, these next sections of this paper will bring together FPU, the ECFA, and the main assertion of this essay. Pastors question if Dave Ramsey’s “7 Baby Steps” develop faithful stewards who are more

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<sup>39</sup> Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, accessed December 7, 2018, <http://www.ecfa.org/>.

<sup>40</sup> Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. Several large churches in the Evangelical Church are members of the ECFA.

generous toward the ministries of their local Evangelical church. Data referenced in Chapter 4 suggests this may not be the case, at least initially, for over half of our churches.

According to [stewardshipcentral.org](http://stewardshipcentral.org) (one of Dave Ramsey's websites), "more than 2.5 million families who have enrolled in FPU have kicked debt to the curb."<sup>41</sup> He asserts these families have "taken control of their money and become generous givers. Basically, they've learned God's ways of handling money," noting that "the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) is reinforcing those findings in its first ever Church Stewardship Survey."<sup>42</sup>

The results of the survey, released in February 2018, are a compilation of responses from more than 100 ECFA-accredited churches nationwide, plus almost 1,000 others who are unaccredited. They show that churches are "not only concerned about addressing biblical stewardship in their congregations, but for many, FPU is a big part of the solution."<sup>43</sup>

The relevant results of the ECFA Church Stewardship Survey, compiled by the ECFA Research Division, are:<sup>44</sup>

- If at least 20 percent of a congregation went through FPU, it saw an increase in giving during the following year.

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<sup>41</sup> Ramsey, "Pastors on FPU: It's Working." In a follow-up email when asked about this taken-down website, Ramsey Solutions responded, "Thank you for contacting Ramsey Care. This is a great question. Unfortunately, the [stewardshipcentral.org](http://stewardshipcentral.org) website was taken down a few months ago and we do not have any replacement sites for it. We apologize for the inconvenience." January 3, 2020. Jody Norcio

<sup>42</sup> Ramsey, "Pastors on FPU: It's Working." See previous footnote.

<sup>43</sup> Warren Bird, "Charitable Giving Inches Upward," Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, February 2018, <https://www.efca.org/content/charitable-giving-inches-upward.aspx>.

<sup>44</sup> Bird, "Charitable Giving Inches Upward."

- Churches received an additional \$207 per FPU attendee annually compared to churches that did not use FPU.
- Total annual giving rose slightly from December of 2016 to December of 2017, with 78% of churches reporting an income equal to or better than the previous year (22% saw a decrease in giving over the same period of time). This may attest to the health of the economy having an impact on local church giving.
- Larger churches indicated a higher percentage of an increase in giving than smaller churches (churches over 1,000 in attendance saw an 11% increase in giving over churches with less than 1,000 attenders).

In addition, in another landmark survey conducted by the Evangelical Council for Financial Integrity titled “The Generosity Project,” the President of the ECFA states younger generations demand higher standards of integrity.

ECFA is pleased to provide this report on The Generosity Project. It is based on data gathered from 16,800 givers to ECFA members. This report examines the giving patterns of the largest generation—Millennials. They see the world in a whole new way. One thing is clear—Millennials and older generations place a premium on honest practices in the ministries they support. Additionally, financial accountability significantly impacts their giving decisions.<sup>45</sup>

Both Ramsey Solutions and the ECFA have extensive research divisions.

However, there is a discrepancy between the FPU results and those of 42 churches in the denomination of The Evangelical Church. After the completion of FPU, generosity in annual giving at our churches actually went down in 23 out of the 42 churches (55%).

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<sup>45</sup> Dan Busby, “The Generosity Project,” Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, 2017, [https://www.efca.org/PDF/ECFA\\_Generosity\\_Report\\_2017\\_EXEC\\_SUMMARY.pdf](https://www.efca.org/PDF/ECFA_Generosity_Report_2017_EXEC_SUMMARY.pdf).

This will be unpacked further in Chapter 4, but it is important to note here the disconnect between our results and the claims listed above.

It appears safe to claim this result: Giving *could* increase if a local church wishes to invest over \$1,000 in hosting FPU. However, expectations of a local pastor should not be placed unnecessarily high because this research indicates there is *no guarantee* of even a \$207 increase in tithes and offerings per member toward a local church. There may be hopes or even a desire of an increase, but no one should claim this as a high probability for every local church who facilitates FPU. Too many variables are involved when gauging success. For example, the size of church (larger churches seem to benefit more) and the number of times FPU is taught (it is possible 20% of a church needs to take the class before giving increases). Further to be considered is how the overall economy affects donor giving. Additionally, stewardship activities done outside the class must support the principles in the class. If a church only teaches the class and does nothing else to disciple its members, results will not be as satisfactory.

Therefore, “truth in advertising” is a caution before asserting Dave Ramsey’s bold claim that giving will double with FPU graduates. One must explain what is meant by “double” and perhaps explain how the giving increase is not necessarily toward the local church.

For instance, for anyone to say local churches received an additional average of \$207 per FPU attendee (as previously documented through the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability) when compared to churches that did not use FPU, does not necessarily correlate with over half of the local churches in The Evangelical Church. This expectation of an additional \$207 per attendee would hypothetically be untrue for the first

couple of years after completion of the class in many of our churches. Too many variables exist to use this blanket promise, like church size, individual family dynamics, or regional economic conditions.

To be fair, a somewhat loose correlation exists in all three research settings discussed in this paper (Dave Ramsey's Research Division, ECFA's Research Division, and results from The Evangelical Church). The more times an FPU class is taught in a local church, the higher the increase in annual giving (which implies a higher percentage of members have successfully completed the class). All research supports lowering pastors' expectations if a church only hosts one class, especially if some attenders of the class are from the community outside of the regular church family, which is a real possibility since many of our churches utilize FPU as an outreach tool.

Obviously, a major question arises in the mind of this author. Why did the results from the 42 churches in The Evangelical Church not match the results from other sources? Perhaps Dave Ramsey's team was correct in stating their follow-up stewardship program is a necessary solution mentioned to this author in our face-to-face meetings at Ramsey's facility outside of Nashville early in 2019. They mentioned Dave Ramsey's *Momentum*, which is a church-wide journey that will transform the way your church views money and giving,<sup>46</sup> but more on this additional Ramsey program later.

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<sup>46</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum." "Momentum" will be a major discussion point in chapter 5.

### Review and Launch into New Data

1. Malachi 3:8, in the original Hebrew language, differentiates between the concepts of tithes and offerings, although most people do not grasp or practice the difference.
2. A vast majority of Christians do not tithe<sup>47</sup> and over a third of church attenders have a giving record of zero.<sup>48</sup>
3. The average Christian gives away somewhere between 2% and 4% of their income, far below a full 10% tithe, and remarkably very similar to non-believers' giving habits.<sup>49</sup>
4. The Evangelical Church, the Global Wesleyan Alliance, and the National Association of Evangelicals all support biblical stewardship principles but disagree on the “commandment” of tithing. The same would be the true for many different denominations across America.
5. The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability monitors church accountability in building up trust with donors and is respected by Ramsey Solutions and The Evangelical Church.

The topic at hand will be the possible perception that FPU has not met expectations of some local pastors in The Evangelical Church for increasing tithes and

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<sup>47</sup> George Barna, “American Donor Trends,” Barna Group, June 3, 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trends/>.

<sup>48</sup> Jason Firch, “2018 Online Giving Statistics, Trends & Data: The Ultimate List of Giving Stats,” Nonprofits Source, 2019, <https://nonprofitssource.com/online-giving-statistics/>.

<sup>49</sup> Giving USA, *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2014* (Chicago: Giving USA Foundation, 2015).

offerings. Our pastors have questioned if Dave Ramsey's "7 Baby Steps" develop faithful stewards who are more generous toward the ministries of their local Evangelical church. Data collected from 42 Evangelical Churches over a five-year period indicates FPU graduates may NOT necessarily be more generous toward their local church, for possibly up to three years. The intended outcome of this research is to better match pastor expectations in our local Evangelical Churches with recent data regarding FPU graduates' generosity through their tithes. In our churches, it was more likely for giving to go down, rather than up, immediately after FPU completion. Why? Could it be the graduates are focusing on getting out of debt for a couple of years before they focus on generosity? Quite possibly, but let's first look at the results in this small denomination.

### Addendum 1, Chapter 3:

#### Historical Wealth Quotes<sup>1</sup>

Lampis the ship owner, on being asked how he acquired his great wealth, replied, My great wealth was acquired with no difficulty, but my small wealth, my first gains, with much labor. **Epictetus**

If a rich man is proud of his wealth, he should not be praised until it is known how he employs it. **Socrates**

Teach self-denial and make its practice pleasure, and you can create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer.  
**Sir Walter Scott**

Wealth is a great thing to have and a great thing to share. **Harold Honickman**

Rich people should consider that they are only trustees for what they possess, and should show their wealth to be more in doing good than merely in having it. **Joseph Hall**

We shall have better business when everyone realizes that while it pays to invest money in their industries and develop natural resources, it pays still higher dividends to improve mankind and develop human resources. **H. E. Steiner**

Power, money, that's just the road to respect. After all, money disappears, friends die, and you die, but your reputation remains. **Thor Bjorgolfsson**

Luxury is the first, second and third cause of the ruin of republics. It is the vampire which soothes us into a fatal slumber while it sucks the life-blood of our veins. **Payson**

When a man tells you he got rich through hard work, ask him: Whose? **Don Marquis**

If a man successful in business expends a part of his income in things of no real use, while the poor employed by him pass through difficulties in getting the necessities of life, this requires his serious attention. **John Woolman**

Just as war is waged with the blood of others, fortunes are made with other people's money. **Andre Soares**

I've been more bossed by my fortune than it has been bossed by me. **John P. Lippett**

Remember, diamonds are only lumps of coal that stuck to their jobs. **B. C. Forbes**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/theme/wealth/>. Additional Forbes citation listed in Chapter 6.



## CHAPTER 4:

### DATA GATHERED FROM THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH

*12 “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.*

*13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’*

*17 “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’*

*26 “The master replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what they have will be taken away.*

***Luke 19:12-13, 17, 26***

Annual giving data was gathered from 42 churches supported by The Evangelical Church as they completed a stewardship discipleship process between 2014 and 2018. Assistance was rendered to about 20,000 church attenders in a variety of ways, including sermon delivery, teaching stewardship seminars, and helping start FPU classes. The goal for this data collection was to determine the effectiveness of the denomination’s stewardship program, specifically FPU, over the past five years.

While Dave Ramsey’s organization shares the statistic of the generosity of FPU attenders doubling from 4% to 8% to all causes after successfully completing the class, unfortunately, no research has been done in The Evangelical Church. We have simply accepted Ramsey’s own, potentially biased, research gathered through Ramsey Solutions research division from exit surveys done by FPU graduates. A broad search by this author has determined no other denomination has conducted a similar survey for the specific purpose of determining how FPU affects giving to their local church through tithes and offerings. Favorably, Dave Ramsey’s team has asked for the results of this research upon

completion of this dissertation, potentially improving FPU and their communication regarding the giving results for graduates. It speaks volumes that Ramsey Solutions is willing to receive outside data from third-party sources, rather than only relying on their own internal research division.

Therefore, the stated objective of this data collection was to gather, compile, and interpret the numbers relating to annual giving through these 42 churches where stewardship seminars were offered and FPU was provided. This data could help determine whether we should continue formally utilizing FPU after investing an average of approximately \$1,000 per local church.

We also hope to better match pastor hopes of an increase in the tithe with actual results for over a five-year period. Although not the primary heart motivation for hosting a class, due to Ramsey's own advertising, local pastors have an expectation that giving will increase after successful completion of the class. The churches involved in this study are listed in Table 2, below, organized by the year FPU was started at each location.

*Table 2 – Stewardship Emphasis and FPU Started by Location/Date*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Church Name</b>	<b>Location*</b>
2014	Fallon	Fallon, MT (Western)
2014	Faith	Billings, MT (Western)
2014	Fellowship	Lizella, GA (South Eastern)
2014	Living Water	Billings, MT (Western)
2014	Bridgeway	Kendallville, IN (East Central)
2014	Faith	Sumner, IA (North Central)
2014	Grace	Milwaukee, WI (North Central)
2014	Grace	Hinton, IA (North Central)
2014	New Hope	Moville, IA (North Central)
2014	Everson	Everson, PA (Eastern)
2014	New Beginning	Youngwood, PA (Eastern)
2014	Waycross	Brooklyn Park, MN (North Central)
2014	Christ Life	Columbia Heights, MN (North Central)
2015	Florence	Florence, OR (Pacific)
2015	Swisshome	Swisshome, OR (Pacific)
2015	Absarokee	Absarokee, MT (Western)
2015	Breath of Life	East Wenatchee, WA (Pacific)
2015	Evangelistic	Roberta, GA (est.) (South Eastern)
2015	Gospel Mission	Dublin, IN (East Central)
2015	Columbus	Columbus, MT (Western)
2015	Big Timber	Big Timber, MT (Western)
2015	South Albany	South Albany, OR (Pacific)
2015	Faith	Crystal Springs, ND (Western)
2016	Canby	Canby, OR (Pacific)
2016	High Plains	Gillette, WY (Western)
2016	Oregon City	Oregon City, OR (Pacific)
2016	Maupin	Maupin, OR (Pacific)
2016	Ligonier	Ligonier, IN (East Central)
2016	Sturgis	Sturgis, MI (East Central)
2016	Corvallis	Corvallis, OR (Pacific)
2016	First	Albany, OR (Pacific)
2016	Glenfair	Portland, OR (Pacific)
2017	First	Vancouver, WA (Pacific)
2017	Park Place	Oregon City, OR (Pacific)
2017	Adna	Chehalis, WA (Pacific)
2017	Pedee	Monmouth, OR (Pacific)
2017	Wesley	Shiloh, OH (East Central)

Year	Church Name	Location*
2017	Chapel	Colbert, WA (Pacific)
2017	Glendive	Glendive, MT (Western)
2018	Element	Cheyenne, WY (Western)
2018	Harvest	Billings, MT (Western)
2018	Harvest Springs	Great Falls, MT (Western)

\*Six (6) churches North Central Conference (NC)  
 Two (2) churches Eastern Conference (E)  
 Five (5) churches East Central Conference (EC)  
 Fifteen (15) churches Pacific Conference (P)  
 Twelve (12) churches Western Conference (W)  
 Two (2) churches Southeast Conference (SE)  
 Zero (0) churches Southwest Conference (SW)

The Evangelical Church is organized into seven Conferences in the United States.<sup>2</sup> It is a small denomination of approximately 125 total U.S. churches, mainly across the northern part of the United States, due mostly to German immigrants who originally were part of the Evangelical United Brethren, Holiness Methodist and Evangelical Holiness Churches.<sup>3</sup> Associations also exist in Bolivia, Fiji, Japan, India, and Liberia, where a far higher number of established churches are represented internationally than are actually held inside the border of the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Each of the seven Conferences in the U.S. maintains a total giving record for all its local churches. They disclose these records to the denomination office in Portland, Oregon. No private donor records are recorded in these offices, to protect the privacy

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Eckhardt, "Who We Are," The Evangelical Church, accessed December 1, 2018, <http://www.theevangelicalchurch.org/who-we-are>.

<sup>3</sup> Brian Hotrum, *The Evangelical Story: The History of The Evangelical Church* (Kearney, NE: Morris Pub., 2006), 17-29. Mr. Hotrum is the official Historian of The Evangelical Church and has authored several books for our denomination.

<sup>4</sup> Hotrum, *The Evangelical Story*, 226-229.

rights of individual donors. Local churches maintain actual donor records in order to provide Internal Revenue Service tax receipts. It was necessary to access these churches' giving record totals, which was accomplished through our national office, and, if need be, also in our seven individual Conference offices.

Research methodology included tabulating the giving totals for a five-year period for each church: one year prior to offering FPU, the year the class was taught, then three years after the class was held. It is important to note that during this five-year period, one church was officially closed, and another church departed our denomination. Both of these churches provided information for the one year prior and actual year of the FPU class starting. They were removed from the data tabulation in subsequent years.

Mainly comprised of rural and smaller churches, our local pastors are humble ministers of the Gospel fulfilling their call from God in the Holiness tradition, being both Wesleyan and Armenian in doctrine, committed to making true disciples of Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> These devoted pastors are more serious about discipleship than garnering high salaries. Far from their minds would be the greedy thought that offering FPU to their flock might manipulate the tithe.

In order to give a better context to the humble financial contexts of our churches and pastors in The Evangelical Church, a prior salary survey of the ministers in our denomination support the humility of these laborers in our fields, pointed out in Table 3 below. Notice our pastoral salary packages are perhaps not as high as other similar denominations, specifically in wage earning potential, according to the national pastor salary survey conducted by Guidestone Financial Resources with similar church sizes and

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<sup>5</sup> Hotrum, *The Evangelical Story*, 121.

in comparable states, where the average pastor salary with housing allowance is \$63,970.<sup>6</sup> Please understand no results were turned in from our Southwest (SW) Conference, as their three churches were considered “mission” churches of the denomination. As part of the Navajo Nation, their cultural context as a sovereign nation regarding United States tax laws is obviously different, thus charitable giving results are not reported to the IRS.

*Table 3 – Evangelical Church Pastor Salary Survey (92 Responses)<sup>7</sup>*

	Western	SE	NC	Eastern	EC	Pacific
Responses	20	3	14	9	10	36
Avg. Base Salary + Housing	\$52,145	\$53,046	\$39,739	\$31,183	\$27,648	\$47,121
Pastor is Bi-vocational	10%	33%	21%	56%	0%	15%
Provides Housing Allowance Average Amount	65% \$15,600	100% \$15,980	57% \$7,950	22% \$12,000	70% \$5,643	61% \$17,736
Live in a Parsonage	35%	0%	71%	56%	70%	20%
Spouse must work	20%	0%	57%	22%	40%	35%
Retirement Provided	75%	33%	71%	56%	80%	85%
Avg. Percent of Base Salary	9%	15%	9%	6%	9%	8.6%
Church Reimburses Expense	80%	66%	64%	44%	50%	54%
Pastor Opts Out of SSI	25%	0%	14%	22%	30%	30%

The following statistics from The Evangelical Church garnered from this survey show humble financial packages for our local pastors, hopefully shedding light on the fact that our laborers are not in ministry for the money alone and would not manipulate Dave Ramsey’s FPU as a fundraising tool. The average head pastor base salary

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<sup>6</sup> Carol Pipes, “Customized Compensation Report,” LifeWay Compensation Study, October 10, 2019, <http://compstudy.lifeway.com/customizedreport.do>.

<sup>7</sup> Salary Survey conducted by the Kingdom Resource Ministry of the Evangelical Church. Portland, Oregon, 2014. Commissioned by General Superintendent Brian Eckhardt and the Board of Kingdom Resource Ministries.

(including housing allowance) in The Evangelical Church is \$43,607 annually, far below the \$63,970 figure cited above. Bi-vocational pastors number only 17%, but 34% of our pastors said their spouses must work outside the home to meet living expenses. Only half of our head pastors receive a housing allowance (the average amount is \$13,894), while the percentage of pastors who live in a parsonage is 38%, though parsonage usage is rapidly declining in our denomination.

Further showing our pastors are ministers because of their calling, and not because of big paychecks, is the statistic that only 59% of our pastors get reimbursed for regular business expenses like gasoline, books, and professional fees. It is appreciated when 74% of churches provide retirement benefits, but the average amount is only 8.7% of their base salary, hardly enough to retire on. In order to stretch their dollars, a full 25% of our pastors opt out of Social Security. Financial packages are even lower for our assistant or executive pastors, like youth pastors or children's directors, who only average 66% of our head pastors in salary with a housing allowance. Our healthiest churches spend less than 50% of their budget on pastor's and staff salaries. Interestingly, though, if a church budget is less than \$75,000, it is very difficult to stay under that 50% goal. The survey revealed the size of a church is the major factor is salary amount, with pastor's longevity of service being next. Not surprisingly, our urban pastors make more than our rural pastors nationwide. To reiterate, pastors in The Evangelical Church are not motivated by money; rather they take somewhat smaller salaries compared to others with an equal level of education, while simply obeying God's call into their field of ministry.

At the heart of the data collection for this research project is the feeling FPU may not deliver the doubling of giving to our local churches through tithes and offerings that

pastors could be led to believe. While Ramsey Solutions does not promise giving will double to the local church, their claims may set an expectation in the hearts of our pastors that it will happen. Table 4, listed below, relates our giving data to answer the question of how the graduates of Financial Peace University provide tithes and offerings to our local churches. These are the annual giving totals from 42 churches in The Evangelical Church (from 6 of 7 Conferences). One Conference (Southwest) has only three churches, on the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. No stewardship seminars were held there; neither was FPU facilitated in those three churches. For the remaining churches, data was collected for one year prior and three years after FPU was started (which is listed in bold). Data was retrieved with permission of the General Superintendent of The Evangelical Church, Brian Eckhardt. Each of the affected local Conference Superintendents also gave permission to access their giving data.

These giving figures are self-reported to their Conference office, located as follows<sup>8</sup>:

Pacific Conference in Clackamas, Oregon.  
 Western Conference in Billings, Montana.  
 Southwest Conference in Farmington, New Mexico.  
 North Central Conference in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota.  
 East Central Conference in Bryan, Ohio.  
 Eastern Conference in Marlton, New Jersey.  
 Southeast Conference in Lizella, Georgia.

Each Conference superintendent forwarded their results to the denomination office, located in Portland, Oregon. The General Superintendent archived all the

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<sup>8</sup> Brian Eckhardt, "Regional Conferences," The Evangelical Church, accessed October 12, 2019, <https://www.theevangelicalchurch.org/our-districts>.



statistical information turned in by the Conferences for future reference as well as for year-by-year comparisons.

Shading has been utilized in Table 4 to better separate results for easier readability and to differentiate churches by the year Financial Peace University was instituted. These numbers cross-reference with Table 2. The first year of FPU was 2014, and the remaining sections distinguish starting years of 2015 to 2018.

Table 4 – Giving Data 2014 to 2018 (\*xxxxxxx figures not in five-year study)

<b><u>CHURCH NAME</u></b>	<b>PRIOR YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR OF FPU</b>	<b>YEAR TWO</b>	<b>YEAR THREE</b>	<b>YEAR FOUR</b>
Fallon	\$64,825	<b>\$63,885</b>	\$43,812	\$38,042	\$40,161
Faith	\$1,587,603	<b>\$1,490,513</b>	\$1,621,416	\$1,597,916	\$1,696,649
Fellowship	\$106,892	<b>\$106,152</b>	\$113,754	\$111,224	\$114,408
Living Water	\$43,790	<b>\$35,355</b>	\$31,184	\$31,460	\$34,820
Bridgeway	\$58,794	<b>\$75,530</b>	\$105,660	\$109,116	\$109,737
Faith	\$164,228	<b>\$158,697</b>	\$137,688	\$125,840	\$145,226
Grace	\$34,150	<b>\$47,174</b>	Closed	Closed	Closed
Grace	\$37,529	<b>\$39,999</b>	\$44,759	\$55,932	\$55,342
New Hope	\$55,113	<b>\$55,117</b>	\$56,097	\$56,548	\$57,126
Everson	\$88,632	<b>\$79,868</b>	\$77,123	\$75,087	\$72,476
New Beginning	\$79,831	<b>\$81,900</b>	\$79,351	\$80,170	\$79,424
Waycross	\$241,546	<b>\$207,080</b>	\$227,052	\$111,114	\$191,118
Christ Life	\$119,702	<b>\$118,975</b>	\$117,648	\$94,047	\$96,707
Florence	\$65,612	<b>\$87,291</b>	\$85,786	\$66,659	\$73,240
Swisshome	\$94,269	<b>\$97,769</b>	\$101,273	\$110,430	\$110,430
Absarokee	\$170,590	<b>\$190,425</b>	\$193,874	\$198,230	\$229,387
Breath of Life	\$90,848	<b>\$90,648</b>	\$91,296	\$97,296	\$108,099
Evangelistic	\$148,000	<b>\$146,000</b>	Withdrew	Withdrew	Withdrew
Gospel Mission	\$64,903	<b>\$58,283</b>	\$58,457	\$62,466	\$60,167
Columbus	\$363,198	<b>\$349,951</b>	\$398,505	\$360,093	\$365,314
Big Timber	\$282,983	<b>\$302,092</b>	\$327,300	\$327,040	\$352,857
South Albany	\$783,000	<b>\$780,539</b>	\$364,639	\$938,714	\$926,807
Faith	\$130,794	<b>\$128,704</b>	\$121,538	\$112,550	\$84,693
Canby	\$160,968	<b>\$172,752</b>	\$157,606	\$193,923	xxxxxxx
High Plains	\$1,078,062	<b>\$1,010,255</b>	\$1,550,709	\$987,953	xxxxxxx
Oregon City	\$1,088,054	<b>\$1,050,218</b>	\$1,063,774	\$1,036,755	xxxxxxx
Maupin	\$87,752	<b>\$105,453</b>	\$121,197	\$137,694	xxxxxxx
Ligonier	\$188,446	<b>\$185,333</b>	\$200,185	\$189,012	xxxxxxx
Sturgis	\$229,114	<b>\$225,514</b>	\$231,924	\$198,094	xxxxxxx
Corvallis	\$240,100	<b>\$291,750</b>	\$262,695	\$295,953	xxxxxxx
First	\$164,655	<b>\$153,806</b>	\$144,486	\$141,725	xxxxxxx
Glenfair	\$131,404	<b>\$144,210</b>	\$139,794	\$162,597	xxxxxxx
First	\$627,708	<b>\$702,140</b>	\$1,033,860	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Park Place	\$123,236	<b>\$138,289</b>	\$132,841	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Adna	\$46,648	<b>\$58,063</b>	\$70,928	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Pedee	\$97,864	<b>\$96,158</b>	\$106,420	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Wesley	\$95,007	<b>\$85,947</b>	\$93,981	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Chapel	\$135,321	<b>\$129,809</b>	\$134,012	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Glendive	\$207,228	<b>\$183,944</b>	\$199,244	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Element	\$1,503,981	<b>\$1,811,667</b>	xxxxxxx*	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx

Harvest	\$3,950,135	<b>\$4,054,383</b>	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx
Harvest Springs	\$600,657	<b>\$623,536</b>	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx	xxxxxxx

### Analysis

Surprisingly, data analysis reveals generosity initially went DOWN in 23 out of the 42 churches (55%) the year the class was taught. Only 45% of churches saw positive results in that important year. Why might this be? Were FPU graduates intensely focusing on eliminating debt as opposed to being more generous, and thus following the 7 Baby Steps? This author wonders if waiting until the end of FPU to emphasize generosity might have caused some (but not all) graduates to pause giving while getting their heads above water financially and overcoming severe debt challenges.

Since over half of the churches did not see this increase in giving immediately following their church hosting FPU, many local pastors might have a hard time justifying the effectiveness of FPU as reflected on their local church budgets after sacrificing around \$1,000. Some local pastors might even question truth in advertising about FPU, as their expectations were hoping to gather twice as much (doubling) giving, as proclaimed by Ramsey Solutions (though Ramsey never promised the giving increase was all going to the local church).

Notice in the following tables a few facts from the data. First, although more churches (23) saw a decrease in giving the year the class was taught, their percentage decrease in giving was significantly LESS than the churches who saw an increase in giving the year the class was taught (19). Stated another way, the 19 churches who saw an increase after FPU realized a significantly higher percentage of increase than the percentage of decrease in the 23 churches whose giving declined. This is why there was

an overall total increase in giving during the year of FPU for all churches combined, even though fewer than half of the churches experienced this increase themselves.

Is church size or, at the very least, budget size, a variable in the change in giving after FPU? Not necessarily. Five total churches had a budget of over \$1,000,000. Of those five, three churches found giving had decreased (Faith at 6.1%, High Plains at 6.3% and Oregon City at 3.5%). On the other hand, two of the five churches noticed an increase in giving (Element at a big 17.0% and Harvest at 2.6%). Element's results skew the rest of the sample, but it is understood a significant number of people took FPU there, in more than one class. A better question to ask, therefore, is, "Is the percentage of people who took the class at each church a variable in success rate?" More on that in Chapter 5.

Conversely, seven small churches had budgets of less than \$75,000. Three of the seven churches scored a result where giving was decreased (Fallon at 1.5%, Living Water at 19.3% and Gospel Mission at 10.2%). On the other hand, four churches scored an increase in giving (Grace in Milwaukee, WI at 27.7%, Grace in Hinton, IA at 6.2%, New Hope at a miniscule 0.001% and Adna at 19.7%). It appears these four very small churches skewed the overall data on this one, all increasing by over 10%, but this might be easily explained on the saturation of these churches, where offering an FPU class may touch over half of the actual attenders of that tiny local church.

The following two tables show the churches who experienced a decrease in giving (Table 5) or an increase in giving (Table 6). It is important to note that the percentage increased or decreased is relative to church size, so its effects on the overall increase or decrease in the denomination are not necessarily in proportion to this percentage of change. A small church may have a huge percentage change, but that difference may only

be a couple of thousand dollars. A large church may have a seemingly small percentage change, but it might represent tens of thousands of dollars. However, the small church pastor would likely note that a couple thousand dollars' difference in his budget might be a bigger deal to his church than a large church that sees the same percentage change.

*Table 5 – Churches Where Giving Decreased after FPU*

<b><u>CHURCH NAME</u></b>	<b>PRIOR YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR OF FPU</b>	<b>PERCENT DECREASE</b>
Fallon	\$64,825	<b>\$63,885</b>	1.5
Faith	\$1,587,603	<b>\$1,490,513</b>	6.1
Fellowship	\$106,892	<b>\$106,152</b>	0.07
Living Water	\$43,790	<b>\$35,355</b>	19.3
Faith	\$164,228	<b>\$158,697</b>	3.4
Everson	\$88,632	<b>\$79,868</b>	9.9
Waycross	\$241,546	<b>\$207,080</b>	14.3
Christ Life	\$119,702	<b>\$118,975</b>	0.06
Breath of Life	\$90,848	<b>\$90,648</b>	0.02
Evangelistic	\$148,000	<b>\$146,000</b>	1.4
Gospel Mission	\$64,903	<b>\$58,283</b>	10.2
Columbus	\$363,198	<b>\$349,951</b>	3.7
South Albany	\$783,000	<b>\$780,539</b>	0.3
Faith	\$130,794	<b>\$128,704</b>	1.4
High Plains	\$1,078,062	<b>\$1,010,255</b>	6.3
Oregon City	\$1,088,054	<b>\$1,050,218</b>	3.5
Ligonier	\$188,446	<b>\$185,333</b>	1.7
Sturgis	\$229,114	<b>\$225,514</b>	1.6
First	\$164,655	<b>\$153,806</b>	6.6
Pedee	\$97,864	<b>\$96,158</b>	1.8
Wesley	\$95,007	<b>\$85,947</b>	9.6
Chapel	\$135,321	<b>\$129,809</b>	4.1
Glendive	\$207,228	<b>\$183,944</b>	11.3

Table 6 – Churches Where Giving Increased after FPU

<b>CHURCH NAME</b>	<b>PRIOR YEAR</b>	<b>YEAR OF FPU</b>	<b>PERCENT INCREASE</b>
Bridgeway	\$58,794	<b>\$75,530</b>	22.2
Grace	\$34,150	<b>\$47,174</b>	27.7
Grace	\$37,529	<b>\$39,999</b>	6.2
New Hope	\$55,113	<b>\$55,117</b>	0.001
New Beginning	\$79,831	<b>\$81,900</b>	2.6
Florence	\$65,612	<b>\$87,291</b>	24.9
Swishhome	\$94,269	<b>\$97,769</b>	3.6
Absarokee	\$170,590	<b>\$190,425</b>	10.5
Big Timber	\$282,983	<b>\$302,092</b>	6.4
Canby	\$160,968	<b>\$172,752</b>	6.9
Maupin	\$87,752	<b>\$105,453</b>	16.8
Corvallis	\$240,100	<b>\$291,750</b>	17.8
Glenfair	\$131,404	<b>\$144,210</b>	8.9
First	\$627,708	<b>\$702,140</b>	10.7
Parkplace	\$123,236	<b>\$138,289</b>	10.9
Adna	\$46,648	<b>\$58,063</b>	19.7
Element	\$1,503,981	<b>\$1,811,667</b>	17.0
Harvest	\$3,950,135	<b>\$4,054,383</b>	2.6
Harvest Springs	\$600,657	<b>\$623,536</b>	3.7

However, all the news is not bad for Dave Ramsey’s team. When data from all 42 churches is combined, there was an average total increase in giving of 2.39% in the year FPU was taught. This author suspected many churches would first see a decrease in giving, then an increase quite soon thereafter, though not to the level of the expected 100% figure of Ramsey Solutions. While the stewardship team for our denomination was extremely grateful when overall giving increased 2.39% that first year, we would be cautious to *guarantee* any church positive results. More accurate advice might say: “*Possibly*, giving could go up for your church budgets if your church invests in facilitating this stewardship class, but it will *probably* initially go down, at least for a short amount of time.”

If a church saw positive results (45% of churches did), then the results were very satisfying as far as tithes and offerings go for their local church leaders and church councils. Unfortunately, many churches might wonder if they were being good stewards, as over half of the churches did not see this increase and budget committees would have a hard time justifying the success of FPU on the bottom line of their local church budget spreadsheets.

While the 2.39% increase in giving did not match the claim of Dave Ramsey's team, it was still an important increase, for which we should be grateful. In Dave Ramsey's defense, his team did not promise the increase in giving would necessarily be given to a local church. Their generosity meter included giving to all causes, both with tithes given to the church *and* offerings given to various causes outside the church, which are many, and increasing all the more year after year.

Additional data analysis reveals that the year after FPU was offered, giving increased an average of 4.24% over the year before the class was facilitated. Any local pastor should and would be thrilled with this figure, as it mutually benefits the class graduates and their local church. With a giving increase of 4.24%, it would not take long for a local church to recoup their \$1,000 investment. Outside the implications of the data, the churches could also celebrate the discipleship lessons learned for the folks who took the class on personal biblical stewardship.

Noteworthy, of the 23 churches (55%) who saw their giving initially go down after FPU, in this second year, 7 of these 23 churches crossed into beneficial results. This is interpreted as substantial, since now a full 26 out of 42 churches (62%) see a positive return on their investment, from only 19 in the first year (45%).

The good news continues, as the third year saw an even greater increase in giving, now totaling 7.06% over the year before offering FPU. This percentage of increase could potentially transform a local church. Furthermore, two more churches crossed into increases in giving in this third year. Now, 28 out of our 42 churches (67%) experienced a net gain on giving as a result of FPU.

One might assume, then, that in the fourth year even more churches will cross the threshold and see a positive return on their investment. However, in the fourth year, giving decreased so much it fell below the 2.39% increase from the year the class was taught. Giving in the fourth year drops to only a 2.04% increase over the year prior to the class start, which is a .35% decrease from the increase of the first year, and doesn't keep up with inflation. This could place in the local pastor's mind a question about the sustainability of FPU on local church budgets through tithes and offerings. What would cause this decrease? After consulting with the Dave Ramsey team, it was suspected the reasons for this might be varied, including the number of times the class is offered and the percentage of attenders who successfully completed FPU, which might be at least a partial answer to these sustainability of giving questions. It appears churches must not do a one-and-done approach to stewardship training; reinforcement appears to be necessary to sustain giving. The old adage from Isaiah 53:6 rings at least partially true, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way." We are no different than sheep; we have short memories and may need periodic reminders, or we drift and go astray. Reinforcing information by teaching it many times is thought to help with retention and longevity, helping potentially sustain these positive giving results.



No new churches crossed the list into positive results in our pool in the fourth year. It seems that if they are going to achieve positive giving results from FPU, it will occur in the first three years or not at all, and it very possibly could go down in the short term while people are working on eliminating debt. In these churches who saw no positive results in four years, we assume other issues hindered their church budgets from increasing after discipling their congregants, perhaps from variables that are not part of this study, like a pastoral transition or decrease in church attendance.

Furthermore, saturation in relation to the number of local church members who take the class was also identified as a factor behind the success of giving after implementing FPU. Ramsey Solutions suggests the more often the class is taught and the more people in a church who attend the class, the more likely there will be positive outcomes.<sup>9</sup> We agreed to study this together and share our results in the future.

The reader is prompted to remember one of Dave Ramsey's famous sayings: "Stop telling your church to give, teach them how."<sup>10</sup> We will be working together to do just that. It must be noted that in this process of making disciples, stewardship principles were taught outside the FPU class in all 42 churches. Sermons were preached, an all-day seminar was facilitated, and follow-up appointments with hundreds of congregants were held with individual families who attended. This was a concerted effort to "teach them how."

Another variable in the analysis of this data may be church size. The larger the church, the more giving may have increased. Couple this with frequency and saturation

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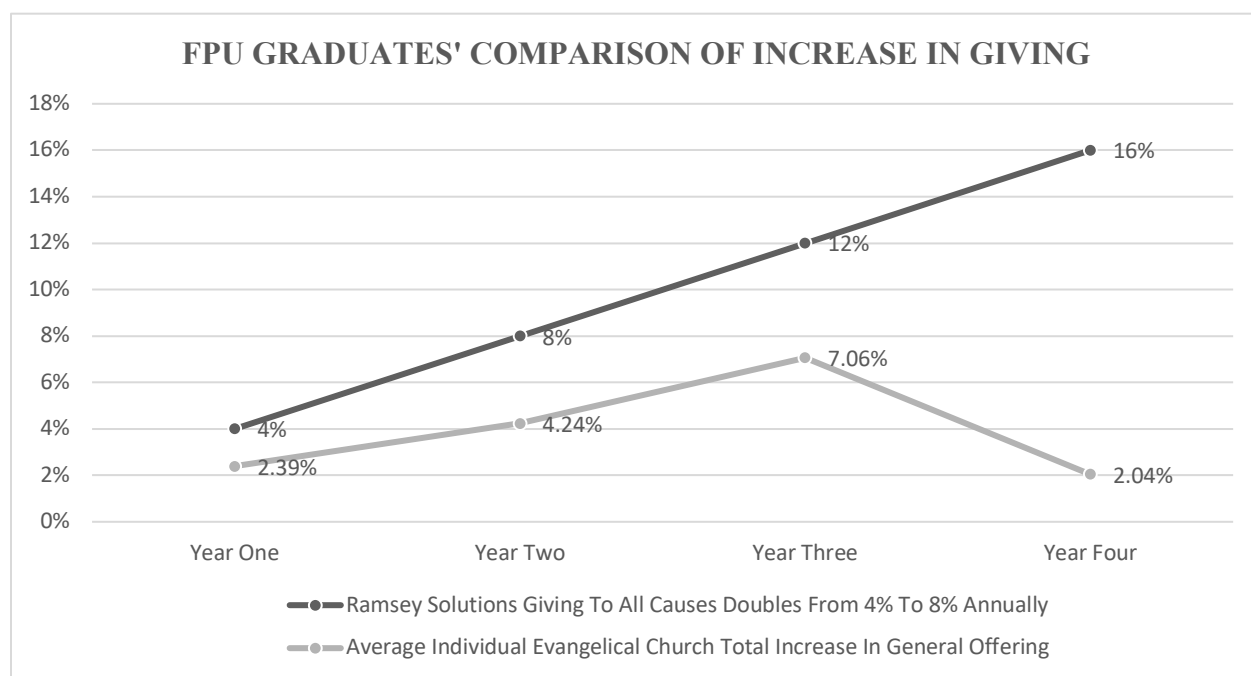
<sup>9</sup> Site visit to Ramsey Solutions. Meeting with Brent Spicer, Director of Strategic Relationships at Ramsey Solutions. January 2019. Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>10</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum."

when a church teaches FPU, and the results may begin to make more sense. Therefore, church size should also be studied to understand if it plays a role in the effectiveness of FPU toward increasing generosity in the local church.

### **Claims Versus Results**

Figure 1 clearly illustrates the divide between the Ramsey claims, which our pastors hoped for, and the actual results. The graphic also clearly shows the shocking result of year number four, illustrating the divide between our research and Ramsey's claims. It is important to understand these figures are the *increase* in giving. Ramsey Solutions stated their graduates were already giving 4% of their earnings to charity, so that would be considered to be the 0% starting point on the graphic. In The Evangelical Church, if following the national average of giving percentage noted earlier in Chapter 2, their giving would also start at 4%, which is the same starting point at 0% on the left axis.



*Figure 1 – A Comparison in Results of Giving with Percentages*

It should be noted, however, that the divide between Ramsey's claims and our results is even steeper than shown on this graph. Ramsey claims FPU attendees gave 4% of their total income prior to starting FPU—a year zero, of sorts—and this number increased by 4% of the attendees' total income every subsequent year. What our data shows is not the percentage of income a graduate gives, as data on attendees' income levels was not collected. Instead, it shows an increase in giving churchwide, as a percentage year over year, not as a percentage of income. Ramsey's data, albeit simplified, would show 0%, then 100%, 200%, and 300% increases in dollar amounts given if attendees went from giving 4% of their income to 16% of their income. This contrasts drastically with results that never reached a 10% increase from original giving, even in the year with the highest increase.

Perhaps Figure 1 above would be best understood if Ramsey tallied giving to *all causes* by the members who completed FPU and we were allowed to access *all* individual giving records in The Evangelical Church. However, this did not occur in both cases, understandably. Therefore, this graphic is somewhat limited and could be construed as over-stated. The intention is simply to show actual giving results in our denomination fall short of the expectations of their stated results. The figure is also designed to show the ensuing drop-off in year four. One's eyes need not look long to realize the lines grow parallel for the first three years, but the change in year four is obvious when depicted on a visual.

The results in the first three years in The Evangelical Church are still encouraging, yet not close to the Ramsey prospect, a point which is still something to be celebrated. No one is saying Ramsey Solutions is intentionally misleading its constituents, but local pastors may not understand Ramsey's rosy giving increase, tabulated across all causes, is not the same as the giving increase in our denomination alone. Ramsey's claim of doubling giving may be vastly overstated when compared to the actual giving results in our denomination, though they may say the correlation of results may potentially also be vastly overstated.

In a peer review of this data during a pair of 700 level DMin classes for Portland Seminary (under the direction of Dr. Daniel Lioy, Ph.D.), several questions were raised regarding consistency of these results compared to the consistency of Ramsey's. Admittedly, other factors could potentially skew our results when looking at only local church giving. For instance, might a lead pastor in transition at a local church affect overall giving, or was there a downturn in the economy, locally or regionally, that

affected the ability of church members to be generous? Certainly, these dramatic situations will affect giving results and every church has challenges that interrupt prior giving habits. There are many reasons why giving might be altered in a church, including interpersonal conflict, local businesses laying off employees, moral failures of a leader, or families simply moving away.

However, while a church or even several churches may have possibly skewed the results because of unforeseen financial circumstances, it may be a moot point because we had a near-even distribution of our negative to positive results (55% decreased in giving, 45% increased in giving). Therefore, the likelihood of dramatic events occurring would probably be near-even on both sides, statistically speaking, especially since the churches we studied are evenly spread across the United States. Local circumstances might skew the results of one church dramatically, but with a large enough sample size like ours spread across the United States, this is less likely to significantly change our overall statistics.

In addition, one should consider Dave Ramsey's huge cross-section of results as a probable "control group" for the purposes of this study. His results are so widespread and of such a high magnitude (potentially millions of people), it would be difficult to skew his records with any one or two isolated events across America. The results from this project do not have near the sample size, but 20,000 people in the affected study group of 42 churches across a vast landscape is still statistically relevant.

### **Review, with a Forward View Toward Potential Solutions**

Research included tabulating overall local church giving for a five-year period for 42 churches across The Evangelical Church. Data was collected for the year prior to

offering FPU, the year the class was taught, and the following three years after the class was completed.

1. Generosity initially went DOWN in 23 out of the 42 churches (55%) the year the class was taught. Only 45% of churches saw positive results in the first year. FPU graduates may have been intensely focusing on eliminating debt, in keeping with the 7 Baby Steps, as opposed to focusing on generosity. This author wonders if waiting until the end of FPU to emphasize generosity might have caused some graduates to initially pause giving.
2. Although only 45% of individual churches in the study had an initial increase in giving, the overall average increase in giving to the local church was 2.39% in the year FPU was taught. This does not match the claim of Ramsey Solutions stating FPU graduates doubled their generosity, from 4% to 8% of their income (a 4% increase).
3. The following year (second year), giving increased a total of 4.24% over the year before the class was taught.
4. In the third year, results revealed a greater increase in giving, now totaling 7.06% over the year before the class was taught. This figure of 7.06% would meet the hopes of many local pastors in The Evangelical Church.
5. However, in the fourth year, giving fell to only a 2.04% increase over the year prior to the class start, a .35% decrease from even the first year.
6. 67% of our churches saw a positive net gain in giving within the first three years of hosting FPU. Therefore, it is unwise to *guarantee* giving will go up in the local church after hosting FPU, but there is a high *probability* it will,

helping a local church's budget and justifying the return on the \$1,000 church investment.

Therefore, questions need to be addressed in Chapter 5 regarding the sustainability of FPU graduates' giving and the potential impact FPU has on local church budgets. Topics will include the issues of church saturation and frequency of teaching the class, as well as how best to reinforce prior teachings that remind local church members of these biblical stewardship principles.

Dave Ramsey's Church Relations Team suggested further research and training for this author, starting with a proposed partnership in attending a conference put on by Ramsey Solutions, which was held in New Mexico in the Winter of 2019. The conference was titled "Momentum" and we collaborated on possible solutions to the sustainability issues relayed above.

Additionally, Ramsey's team has requested the results from this dissertation, as they have been seeking third-party data to strengthen their communication accuracy in addition to gaining a broader understanding of FPU's outcomes (see immediately following the requested communication for Ramsey's church relations team in Addendum 1, Chapter 4).

## **Addendum 1, Chapter 4:**

### **FPU's Effect on Tithes and Offerings in The Evangelical Church:**

#### **Outside Statistics as Requested by Ramsey Solutions**

The Board of Kingdom Resource Ministries (KRM) of The Evangelical Church helped facilitate the teaching of Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University (FPU) at 42 of our local churches across the denomination between 2014 and 2018. At the same time, stewardship seminars were held, and stewardship sermons preached at weekend services at each church. Over \$50,000 in denominational funds were spent in this endeavor, reaching over 20,000 church attenders, with nearly 2,000 FPU participants. Each local church also invested over \$1,000 to support FPU including scholarships, childcare, facilities, advertising, and refreshments.

Data collected from our 42 Evangelical Churches indicates FPU graduates initially may NOT be more generous toward their local church, but probably will 2 to 4 years later, but maybe not necessarily at the level of the hopes of our pastors (which was stated as generosity "doubling" from 4% to 8% of one's income).

After analyzing the results in The Evangelical Church, it was surprising to note how giving actually went *down* in 23 out of our 42 churches (55%) the year the class was taught. Nevertheless, our overall average increase in giving to the 42 churches was +2.39% in that first year. In year two, giving further increased, to a total of +4.24% over the year before the class was taught. In year three after the class, giving now totaled a remarkable increase of +7.06% compared to giving prior to the class.



Thank you, Ramsey Solutions, for helping disciple our congregants in biblical stewardship principles. Thankfully, 67% of our churches saw a positive net increase in giving after hosting FPU.

However, in the fourth year, giving dramatically FELL to only a +2.04% increase over the year prior to the class start, a .35% decrease from even the first year.

Sustainability questions arose from our pastors regarding giving habits after FPU. It was determined to maintain our positive giving results, three concepts would need to be implemented, including reinforcement, frequency, and saturation. In addition, improved communication was necessary in order not to place pastors' expectations needlessly high.

Teaching FPU only one additional time per church, preaching on stewardship at least yearly, as well as saturating the church with 5 to 20% of attenders successfully taking FPU greatly increased giving, by +11.6%, in our denomination, affecting our local church budgets considerably. Six churches out of our 42 achieved over 20% of attenders graduating from FPU, which dramatically increased generosity through tithes and offerings to the local church.

We support the implantation of *Momentum: A Church-Wide Stewardship Campaign* and believe this will almost *guarantee* an increase in our tithes and offerings, as well as changing the giving *culture* of our churches. Evangelical Church pastors wonder if graduates focus on debt reduction immediately after graduating from FPU, as opposed to following the biblical mandate to be generous, especially since giving is not highlighted until the final Baby Step 7.

In conclusion, the Board of Kingdom Resource Ministries in the Evangelical Church endorses Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University for use in our stewardship

program, as it has achieved positive results and facilitated healthy discipleship of Christian stewardship for not only our members/attenders, but also as it effectively reaches out into our communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Forseth, DMin Candidate, Portland Seminary, Oregon.

Spring 2020.

## CHAPTER 5:

### POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

*20 Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said, so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor.*

*21 So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.*

*22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”*

*23 He saw through their duplicity and said to them,*

*24 “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?” “Caesar’s,” they replied.*

*25 He said to them, “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”*

#### **Luke 20:20-25**

As previously stated, the objective of this research project is to gather, compile, and interpret the assorted data relating to annual giving through 42 churches where stewardship seminars were offered and FPU encouraged, to determine the benefits of continuing FPU in The Evangelical Church. Motivation for hosting these classes is for discipling our local congregations on stewardship, and hopes are for a return on discipleship, like young families getting out of crushing debt and better stewarding their resources for the future. Local pastors in our denomination are *not* attempting to only gain a financial return on investment; rather, they seek to “make disciples,” as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19. Ken Shaffer, Church-Wide Stewardship Specialist for Ramsey Solutions, puts the motivation of FPU squarely on this statement: “When stewardship is good, everything gets better for the follower of Jesus. Healthy margin is

created, marriages and parenting are improved, people experience greater spiritual maturity, and the local church's ministry advances."<sup>1</sup>

Before Dave Ramsey, churches across our denomination looked to several Christian financial experts for resources on biblical stewardship principles. The list includes spiritual giants like Ron Blue, Larry Burkett, Howard Dayton, Brian Kluth, Randy Alcorn, and John Maxwell. All are part of this working bibliography. Interestingly, Dave Ramsey gives credit to Larry Burkett for helping formulate his principles on stewardship.<sup>2</sup> It was noticed in The Evangelical Church, Dave Ramsey had the highest percentage (75%) of the market share of our church engagement in biblical stewardship principles by far. Larry Burkett, with his protégé Howard Dayton, came in a distant second. Willow Creek's stewardship programs, out of their South Barrington, Illinois campus, came in third, garnering less than 10% of market share in our denomination.

After sharing the initial results from Chapter 4 of this dissertation with Ramsey's team on a site visit to their headquarters outside Nashville, Tennessee in January 2019, we reflected on why the results had some surprising outcomes. Why did giving initially go down at over half of our churches represented? Why were results tracking so optimistically up to year three, but declined precipitously in year four? Ramsey's team had some ideas in mind and suggested this study dig deeper. Chapter 5 will attempt to do so, at the same time suggesting potential solutions for our denomination to consider regarding FPU. Upon exiting the meeting with Ramsey's team, they graciously provided

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Event Workbook* (Brentwood, TN: Lampo Licensing Group, 2018), introduction. Resource given for attending the training session in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Dave Ramsey, "The Billionaire and the Money Mentor."

the attached Addendum 1, Chapter 5. This document was vital in understanding and moving forward.

### **Seeking Sustainability**

The Board of Kingdom Resource Ministries in The Evangelical Church desired to gauge the effectiveness of our stewardship program, specifically if Financial Peace University should continue to be our preferred discipleship class offering. Remember, in year one, 19 churches out of 42 (45%) saw positive giving results after facilitating FPU. Year two gained six new churches who realized positive results (now 26 out of 42 at 62%), and year three gained two more (now 67% of our participating churches have been helped). Sustaining these positive results is an appropriate desire, but it must be difficult, because in year four no new churches crossed the positive threshold, while, in fact, annual giving advances actually went down to levels below year number one. Understandably, losing traction is less than desirable.

Ramsey's team brought up ideas for sustainability. Specifically, Tony Leonis (Church Research Division), Dyllan Wilson (Stewardship Support), Brent Spicer (Director of Strategic Relationships), and Ken Shafer (Church-Wide Stewardship Specialist) offered thoughtful considerations that centered around these three areas: reinforcement, frequency, and saturation. Using these three principles, it was observed by their own research division, in similar church situations as ours, the probability of the results of increased giving was markedly more sustainable. But how does a local church achieve greater reinforcement, frequency, and saturation? Some might suggest a church solely teach more classes, year after year, or perhaps have larger classes. These would probably suffice, but Ramsey Solutions recommended a giant step further for our

denomination to consider. They recommended an *entire church* go through FPU simultaneously. This has the potential of almost *guaranteeing* an increase in giving to a local church's tithes and offerings, which would overwhelmingly meet a local pastor's expectations. The suggested method is accomplished through a program called "Momentum: A Church-Wide Stewardship Movement."<sup>3</sup> Of course, this also puts a significant amount of increased dollars into Ramsey's pocket. But, if it achieves greater discipleship at the same time as increasing giving, then most pastors would at least consider this suggestion.

The objective of this dissertation research project is to seek possible solutions to the research question: In what ways does Dave Ramsey's FPU assist local Evangelical Churches in discipling faithful stewards who are more generous with their tithes and offerings? *Momentum* training may be the answer and is not overly difficult to implement, although it is somewhat idealistic to gain 100% participation in any local church body.

Brent Spicer, from Ramsey's original leadership team over two decades ago, now Director of Strategic Relations, recommended this author's attendance at their New Mexico "Momentum" Training Seminar to personally discover how this solution might practically be accomplished.

### **Reinforcement**

In behavioral psychology, reinforcement is applying a stimulus that will strengthen a person's future behavior, which includes both positive reinforcement and

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<sup>3</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum."

negative reinforcement.<sup>4</sup> Applied to this research project, reinforcement in financial stewardship would be achieved through the stimulus of attending FPU and applying stewardship principles that would make a difference in one's well-being. For instance, an FPU graduate learns the biblical principle from 2 Corinthians 9:7, which teaches we should give what we have decided in our hearts to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. A church member gives generously to their local church and finds great joy in giving. They are reinforced positively, making them want to give again. When a few months go by without repeating their generosity, they feel badly, which reinforces them negatively.

In most cases, the term "reinforcement" refers to an enhancement of behavior, but this term is also sometimes used by educational psychologists to denote an "enhancement of making a memory which elicits a repeat of the enhanced behavior."<sup>5</sup> Put in terms that better apply to our situation, a reinforcement of making a positive memory of receiving joy when giving to a local church triggers a repeated behavior, or perhaps an increased positive behavior.

A strengthening (reinforcing) effect with generosity as an example may be measured by a higher frequency of behavior (e.g., being generous with your local church ministries more often), longer duration (e.g., not just giving a one-time gift, but sharing

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<sup>4</sup> Shasmik Asingh, "Explain the Term Reinforcement and What Kind of Reinforce Effectively Work to Produce Successful Competitive Spot Behavior," Brainly.com, September 1, 2019, <https://brainly.in/question/7532259>.

<sup>5</sup> Cesare Mondadori, Peter G. Waser, and Joseph P. Huston, "Time-dependent Effects of Post-trial Reinforcement, Punishment or ECS on Passive Avoidance Learning," *Physiology & Behavior* 18, no. 6 (June 1977), [https://doi.org/10.1016/0031-9384\(77\)90018-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0031-9384(77)90018-X).

monthly), and greater magnitude (e.g., last year someone might have tithed 4% of their income, but this year they doubled their percentage of tithe).

Dave Ramsey's team felt reinforcement possibly needed to happen in a wider context in The Evangelical Church, rather than simply facilitating an FPU class. They suggested encouraging pastors to preach on stewardship annually, hold small group sessions to talk about stewardship principles, or model wise stewardship through forming healthy local church budgets. When it was explained these all were attempted in our denomination's stewardship program with each of the 42 churches in our study, they further explained the reinforcement was potentially not repeated soon enough after finishing FPU to provide necessary positive or negative feedback. This made sense. Hence, we move to our next suggestion from Ramsey's team, "frequency."

### **Frequency**

In addition to reinforcement, Dave Ramsey's team suggested determining if the frequency of FPU being taught in a local church might have a greater impact on giving results in our denomination. They implied teaching the class more often would both achieve sustainability of giving as well as continued repetition of receiving generous gifts. Obviously, this also costs participants more money. Some might think all their suggestions are simply to help their bottom line. The only way this works properly is if there is a win-win. Sustainability of giving and increased giving are positives for the local church; at the same time, Ramsey Solutions makes more money.

Frequency is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as the number of times something happens within a particular period, or the fact of something happening often or



reinforced a large number of times, which aids in the retention of learning.<sup>6</sup> In the case of FPU, frequency is simply the number of times a church teaches an FPU class. In our study, the particular period of time would of course be five years, the goal would be to determine how many times the class was reinforced from 2014 to 2018 in each of our 42 churches. Perhaps frequency would help sustainability of our giving in The Evangelical Church.

A 2016 article written for the *Journal of Education and Practice* determined the frequency of applying different teaching strategies and methods made a marked difference in school-aged children as far as retention was concerned.<sup>7</sup> The more often a topic was taught, the greater the learning retention. Therefore, deeper analysis of our data was necessary to determine if our results were negatively affected by churches only teaching FPU one time. Perhaps results would be more positive if churches taught FPU multiple times. See the table below, which breaks down the number of times (frequency) FPU was taught in each of our 42 churches.

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<sup>6</sup> Cambridge English Dictionary, s.v. “Frequency,” accessed October 20, 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/frequency>.

<sup>7</sup> Sonja Ivic, “Frequency of Applying Different Teaching Strategies and Social Teaching Methods in Primary Schools,” *Journal of Education and Practice* (November 30, 2015), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1122875>.

*Table 7 – Frequency of FPU Classes Taught—The Evangelical Church*

<b><u>Church</u></b>	<b><u># of times FPU was taught</u></b>
Fallon	1
Faith	3
Fellowship	1
Living Water	1
Bridgeway	5
Faith	1
Grace	1
Grace	1
New Hope	5
Everson	3
New Beginning	3
Waycross	1
Christ Life	1
Florence	2
Swisshome	2
Absarokee	5
Breath of Life	1
Evangelistic	1
Gospel Mission	3
Columbus	5
Big Timber	5
South Albany	1
Faith	1
Canby	3
High Plains	1
Oregon City	1
Maupin	2
Ligonier	1
Sturgis	5
Corvallis	4
First	1
Glenfair	4
First	3
Park Place	1
Adna	2
Pedee	1

<b><u>Church</u></b>	<b><u># of times FPU was taught</u></b>
Wesley	1
Chapel	1
Glendive	1
Element	2
Harvest	2
Harvest Springs	2

\*Note: Shaded boxes include churches where giving went DOWN first year after FPU + Seminar

The suggested deeper data analysis revealed these noteworthy facts: In the churches (45%) who saw giving go up after teaching FPU, the frequency of teaching FPU was an average of 2.83 times. In the churches (55%) who saw giving go down after teaching FPU, the frequency of FPU being taught was an average of 1.60 times. The difference between these two numbers is statistically relevant and may show a correlation to better results by teaching FPU more frequently.

Many churches who witnessed giving go up taught FPU at least one extra time, although three churches had giving go up and only taught it once. This data supports Brent Spicer's assertion of frequency increasing the chances of sustaining positive giving results and is congruent with the ECFA's stewardship survey results, cited in this project's next section, that increasing frequency is a usually a lead measure for repeated and longer-lasting success.

Could it be this simple? Simply offer FPU multiple times to see a marked increase in local church giving? Evidently, yes. The Church Relations Team at Ramsey Solutions has seemed to nail the shortfall in The Evangelical Church with this one simple

recommendation. Combining the aforementioned reinforcement with frequency, it appears we have discovered a solution.

Moreover, the frequency chart results in Table 7 showed these additional statistically relevant conclusions: Of the 19 churches (45%) who saw giving go up, three churches taught FPU only one time. Of the 23 churches who saw giving go down, 18 churches taught FPU only one time. Teaching the class more often, as well as shortening the timespan between classes to achieve better reinforcement, would likely help giving.

### **Saturation**

Saturation is defined by Business Dictionary as a measure of the extent of a product's sales volume relative to the number of total potential customers, expressed as a percentage.<sup>8</sup> That is, saturation is the percentage of a group of people who were exposed to a product. For sake of this study, if a church taught FPU to 12 people at a church of 120, the saturation percentage would be 10%. Of course, in a larger church, higher saturation is much more difficult to achieve unless a church has much larger class sizes.

An interesting study was conducted by a Facebook consultant in 2018 specifically gauging saturation of certain Facebook ads targeting an individual population (like a jewelry ad targeting 5,000 potential customers who were Christmas shopping). To give his real-life example, how much saturation of the market of parents and grandparents would need to be exposed to a Facebook ad to sell double the previous day's total of a package of diapers? He was trying to determine how many people would need to see a

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<sup>8</sup> Business Dictionary, s.v. "Market Saturation," WebFinance, Inc., accessed November 16, 2019, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/market-saturation.html>.

specific ad to increase sales by two-fold and sustain that level of sales for over a week. His conclusion was the saturation of any targeted audience must be over 5% to double the sales.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the frequency of times the paying customer was exposed to the ad before they bought was more than 1.5 times.<sup>10</sup> This correlates well to this study on FPU; in order to achieve positive results in giving in a church, it *might* be necessary to teach at least five percent of a given congregation, and to teach FPU more than once.

Ramsey Solutions raises the bar on their goal of saturation of each church member who has taken FPU, stating, “*Momentum* strives to reach 80% of each local congregation with FPU.”<sup>11</sup> This is a significant goal, which would obviously impact church giving greatly. Suffice it to say, it is believed this super-saturation of *Momentum* in a congregation might almost *guarantee* greater giving impact to the local church. Initial questions arose whether this was realistic. Eighty percent? It is potentially very difficult for a local pastor to get 80% of the congregation on board with anything.

Through the *Momentum* training in New Mexico, the leaders discussed a study previously mentioned by this author in Chapter 4. Their argument was thus, “A church stewardship survey, as it relates to FPU, was conducted by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. Their research division compiled results found these helpful results:”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kanav Kapoor, “What Is Audience Saturation in Facebook Ads,” Hashtag DMS, May 27, 2018, <https://hashtagdms.com/audience-saturation-in-facebook-ads/>, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Kapoor, “What Is Audience Saturation in Facebook Ads,” 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Momentum.”

<sup>12</sup> Dave Ramsey, “Pastors on FPU: It's Working,” Stewardship Central, 2017, <https://www.stewardshipcentral.org/posts/pastors-on-fpu-its-working>. Unbeknown to this author, stewardshipcentral.org has been taken down by Ramsey Solutions as of Summer of 2019 and now shows a

- If 20 percent of a congregation goes through FPU, it saw a significant increase in giving during the following year.
- Churches received an additional \$207 per FPU attendee annually compared to churches that did not use FPU.

It appears from these results that sustainability of local church tithes and offerings would be accomplished by both the aforementioned frequency of teaching FPU, as well as church saturation by more FPU graduates. Our saturation numbers in The Evangelical Church are not near 20% in these 42 churches as a whole. We reached a 20% saturation figure in only 14% of our 42 churches.

Six churches in our study had the highest saturation (above 20%, which is what the ECFA's benchmark was in previous paragraphs), out of 42 total churches. Columbus Evangelical Church (Columbus, Montana), Bridgeway Church (Kendallville, Indiana), Sturgis Evangelical Church (Sturgis, Michigan), New Hope Church (Moville, Iowa), Big Timber Evangelical Church (Big Timber, Montana), and Absarokee Evangelical Church (Absarokee, Montana) each emphasized stewardship annually, including the facilitation of FPU multiple times, hosting FPU all five years of the study. Not surprisingly, their saturation percentages, although not to the level of 80% suggested by Ramsey's *Momentum*, revealed an incredible average 11.6% increase in giving through four years. Saturation does seem to make a marked difference.

Our results and data will be provided to the team at Ramsey Solutions, which was requested *before* the results were gathered. They were interested in getting third-party documented results from outside sources, which we are happy to provide from our

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"404 Not Found" message. Repeated attempts through email and phone to get an answer as to the reason of this shutdown have been unanswered.

denomination (for the exact results promised to Ramsey's team, see Addendum 1, Chapter 4). This truly has been a collaborative and collegial process with Ramsey's team. Their suggestions should be considered as serious solutions for positive sustainability of giving, including reinforcement, frequency, and saturation.

### ***Momentum***

According to Ramsey Solutions, only three to five percent of evangelical Christians give a full 10% tithe.<sup>13</sup> That means 95 to 97 percent do not. Congregations in The Evangelical Church are eager to turn so-so givers into faithful ones using biblical and intentional stewardship teaching from all sources. They're looking for more effective ways to connect offerings to actual ministry, and to help people experience the peace that comes from being faithful stewards. Perhaps the answer is Dave Ramsey's *Momentum* stewardship training, held around our country several times a year, where it invites church leaders to learn how to create a *culture* of biblical stewardship in their churches. "Pastors can learn how to encourage giving, promote stewardship, develop a long-term plan for their church, create church-wide motivation for financial discipleship, make church financial decisions easier, develop and grow new leaders, and more."<sup>14</sup> Because of the invitation extended to this author to attend a *Momentum* training seminar, this author was in attendance, trying to find the closest seminar to the churches in our study. The Southern Baptist Convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico was open to outside of their denomination attendees, even someone from The Evangelical Church,

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<sup>13</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum."

<sup>14</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum."

which they had never heard of before. We joined together to learn the stewardship principles from *Momentum*.

*Momentum* was started with a comment mentioned at the dinner table by a leader on Ramsey's team. While sharing a meal after a Dave Ramsey live event in 2005, the Ramsey team began thinking out loud about answering this question, "What would it look like if the principles taught in Financial Peace University went beyond family to family and were applied, in a focused and intentional way, across an entire congregation?"<sup>15</sup>

The *Momentum* seminar reinforces the phrase "Stop telling your church to give, teach them how."<sup>16</sup> This fits in directly with the goal of helping our pastors disciple their local church members on stewardship, which eventually would increase giving to the local church, justifying the return on investment of conducting the FPU class. This seminar and its suggested solutions could help local pastors hold more realistic expectations of what FPU might generate in giving toward their local church. It attempts to change the entire giving *culture* of a local church, which supports the long-term goal of sustainability.

*Momentum* trainers told this timeline about the training:

After more than two years of preparation, *Momentum* launched in June 2007, giving the Ramsey Solutions team its first chance to speak into to the stewardship *environment* of local churches. *Momentum* training workshops began in October that same year, and since then, more than seventy such events have taken place. Over 7,000 pastors and church leaders from more than 1,500 congregations across

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<sup>15</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Journey Guide* (Brentwood, TN: Lampo Licensing Group, 2018), 6. This *Momentum: Journey Guide* is a different publication and is not to be confused with the previously cited *Momentum: Event Workbook*, although both were introduced at the same training seminar.

<sup>16</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum."



the nation have received the training, tools and support they've needed to begin transforming the stewardship *culture* of their congregations and ministries.<sup>17</sup>

According to stewardshipcentral.org (one of Dave Ramsey's websites), more than 2.5 million families who have enrolled in FPU have kicked debt to the curb.<sup>18</sup> He asserts these families have taken control of their money and become generous givers (for more information, see Addendum 1, Chapter 5). Basically, they've learned God's ways of handling money, citing "the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) is reinforcing those findings in its first ever Church Stewardship Survey of 1,100 churches."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, they explained, "They show that churches are concerned about addressing biblical stewardship in their congregations, and for many, FPU is a big part of the solution."<sup>20</sup>

Giving *could* increase if a local church wishes to invest over \$1,000 in teaching FPU. However, a local pastor's expectations should not be placed unnecessarily high about an increase in giving, unless a project like *Momentum* is implemented. Not to mention, there are other factors that could and would affect giving, like the economy, changeover in leadership, or church size. Every church will face at least one challenge during a five-year period. It is assumed all did in our study, but all other factors unchanged, it will take something like *Momentum* to disciple an entire flock.

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<sup>17</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Journey Guide*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ramsey, "Pastors on FPU: It's Working." Reminder, stewardshipcentral.org, which was a Ramsey-Solutions-run website that contained access to several articles and pieces of information I relied on during my research, is now giving a "404 Not Found" message, as previously noted.

<sup>19</sup> Ramsey, "Pastors on FPU: It's Working."

<sup>20</sup> Warren Bird, "Charitable Giving Inches Upward," Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, February 2018, <https://www.efca.org/content/charitable-giving-inches-upward.aspx>.

In the *Momentum* training session in New Mexico, the lead presenter taught us the “Joy of Giving” object lesson, where generosity is planted into the minds of every attendee, and the principle is strengthened that teaches “everything is God’s.”<sup>21</sup> Giving is encouraged by Ramsey’s team, enough to include it in their training. Generosity is a substantial byproduct of saturating a congregation with FPU through *Momentum*. However, generosity is not necessarily the main purpose of the FPU class, evident in that “give” is only a part of the final “Baby Step” previously mentioned. Other principles like debt reduction, wise investing, improved savings strategies, and making a budget seem to take forefront. But generosity should also be sought after in an attempt to look beyond oneself and into making a positive difference for God’s Kingdom.

Critical thinking skills perhaps would raise up significant questions and concerns about Ramsey’s plans through *Momentum*. How is it realistically possible to saturate 80% of any local congregation? Has any topic ever garnered that much attention, especially when the topic is as theoretically touchy as finances? What church has this level of follow-through, especially when there seems to be a flavor of the month that invariably takes a church off of an intense focus? In addition, a major question some might raise is, “Why do all the solutions offered by Ramsey’s team involve people giving Ramsey more money?”

Perhaps most of the previous questions could be answered with the most significant part of *Momentum* in what is called “The Momentum Theorem,” which is a formula which reads, “Fi/T(G)=Unstoppable Momentum,” or in words, “Focused

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<sup>21</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Journey Guide*, 46.

intensity over time, multiplied by God, equals Unstoppable Momentum!”<sup>22</sup> This equation fills in many gaps about the realistic ability to reach any congregation at the 80% level, especially when factoring in words like “focused intensity” and “multiplied by God.” The trainers of the program walked the attenders through how to get pastors, church leaders, and attenders to achieve focus and stay on task, finally explaining that when God gets involved and people apply biblical stewardship principles, the momentum is unstoppable.

Why such focused intensity? Why is there such a large need for unstoppable momentum? Ken Schafer at Ramsey Solutions, in its *Momentum* seminar, shares these harrowing statistics, with emphasis on the final stat:

78% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck.  
 Americans carry an average credit card debt balance of \$16,425.  
 Americans carry an average student loan debt balance of \$50,868.  
 58% of Americans would struggle to cover a \$1,000 emergency.  
 Only 5% of adult Americans give 10% of their income to non-profits.  
 Evangelical Christians give less than 3% of their income to charity.  
 \$165 billion would be available to churches if members gave a tithe away.<sup>23</sup>

Pastors would of course salivate at having an additional \$165 billion for the American church to have at their disposal for helping achieve the biblical mandate to make disciples. This would be an average of nearly a half million dollars for each American church, although it is not equally attributable to megachurches compared to small rural churches.<sup>24</sup> It will take a program like *Momentum* to educate American

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<sup>22</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Journey Guide*, 6-7.

<sup>23</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Event Workbook*, 2-5.

<sup>24</sup> Rebecca Randall, “How Many Churches Does America Have? More Than Expected,” *Christianity Today*, September 14, 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/september/how-many-churches-in-america-us-nones-nondenominational.html>. This publication stated the U.S. has between 384,000 to 414,000 American Christian churches.

Christians on the importance of generosity if they hope to garner even a fraction of that large of a number.

Bridging to prior data analysis of this project, where six of our churches achieved saturation of over 20% of members reached and saw an increase in giving of 11.6% over the five-year period, gaining a church attender saturation of over 80% would, in theory, increase the probability of increased giving by four-fold. This perhaps is not an unrealistic promise of at least doubling giving (from 4% to 8%) when considering that high of a probability of an increase. Our Kingdom Resource Ministries of the Evangelical Church would be comfortable endorsing both FPU and *Momentum*, as it relates to increasing tithes and offerings, as long as it is communicated appropriately, to be discussed in the next section.

### **Improved Communication**

Words matter. What we say and how we say it has more impact than we think.<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 4:29 says, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, so that it may benefit those who listen.” So, every word carries weight and evokes expectations. When Ramsey Solutions publishes the fact that FPU graduates double their giving, it is understandable why local church pastors would expect giving to go up for their local church budgets. Ramsey’s team never promised the tithe doubling toward the local church, only pointed out giving doubled *to all causes*.

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<sup>25</sup> Randy Myers, “Five Things Every Leader Should Be Saying,” Coffee with Randy, November 20, 2019, <https://randymyersblog.com/2019/11/20/five-things-every-leader-should-be-saying/>. Randy Myers is a fellow Conference Superintendent in the Pacific Conference of the Evangelical Church.

What would be proper words to use in framing the context of the giving habits of FPU graduates? How could we best communicate actual results in The Evangelical Church, so as to not raise hopes unrealistically?

Fred Nelson, noted marriage mentor and Christian discipler of over 20,000 couples in Montana, states,

Overcommunication is sometimes necessary. In marriage and in life, when there is a miscommunication which has broken down trust, it may be important for those involved to communicate almost excessively. When expectations have not been previously met, there really is no such thing as too much communication, in order to gain back trust and build credibility.<sup>26</sup>

Kent Singletary, in over 10 years of leading *Momentum* efforts to hundreds of churches, unpackages communication in several places during the seminar. One specific place is in forming a “Promotion Team” responsible for “creatively communicating the vision for financial discipleship through Financial Peace University.”<sup>27</sup> Ramsey Solutions says, “You must promote like crazy.”<sup>28</sup> This promotion of FPU may, in fact, be where local church pastors in The Evangelical Church received false hopes for an increase in giving to their church budgets.

What, then, would be recommended for Ramsey Solutions to communicate to pastors about giving possibly going up toward their local church? Table 8 contains baseline suggestions for improving communication between Dave Ramsey’s team and

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<sup>26</sup> Narrate Church, “Narrate Conversations: Fred Nelson,” YouTube video, 33:59, June 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMS6SwWKWaI>. Narrate Church is part of The Evangelical Church, located in Helena, Montana.

<sup>27</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Event Workbook*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Ramsey Solutions, *Momentum: Event Workbook*, 20.

local church pastors while promoting FPU, using the results from 42 churches in The Evangelical Church.

*Table 8 – Recommended Communications Regarding Giving Projections*

“Although not a guarantee, giving to your local church <i>could</i> go up after hosting FPU. However, it may <i>initially</i> go down while graduates focus on eliminating debt.”
“Generosity to church ministries will <i>probably</i> increase 2 to 4 years after FPU. Understand, some graduates <i>may instead</i> decide to be generous with other charitable causes outside your local church.”
“Pastors <i>may</i> increase the probability of tithes and offerings rising by hosting FPU more than once. The frequency of offering FPU positively affects the sharing of tithes and offerings.”
“The higher the percentage of graduates from your local church (saturation of your local church of FPU attenders), the higher the <i>prospects</i> that giving <i>might</i> grow for your local church budget.”
“Sustainability of greater giving results <i>are better</i> when reinforced through sermons and small group discussions. If there is no repetition of stewardship principles by year 4, giving levels will <i>probably</i> decrease.”
“Dramatic positive giving results <i>almost certainly</i> will occur if ‘Momentum: A Church-Wide Stewardship Movement’ is implemented in your local church.”
“Past performance of FPU graduates’ giving increases do not necessarily guarantee future giving results, due to outside factors which include pastoral transition, downturn in the local economy, or disunity in a local church congregation.”
“When promoting FPU, Ramsey Solutions should be cautious to guard against unrealistic expectations; otherwise local church pastors <i>might</i> experience false hopes of increased giving habits for graduates after FPU.”
“When a church fosters a <i>culture</i> of generosity, with the assistance of ‘Momentum: A Church-Wide Stewardship Movement,’ the <i>probability</i> of sharing tithes and offerings with a local church is particularly high.”

### **Consideration of Alternate Claims and Solutions**

It is more than fair for critical thinkers to ask the question, “What solutions are there to increase giving in the local church that do not involve giving Ramsey Solutions more money?” Implementing *Momentum* in a local church at the 80% saturation level will undoubtedly raise the giving levels of people for the church, but at the same time Ramsey Solutions receives *extensive* dollars from numerous new FPU attenders. One

might claim there are non-Ramsey alternatives for elevating the sharing of resources for philanthropic causes in the non-profit world, for the good of our society.

In order to answer the question of alternate claims/solutions adequately, one must first understand the definition of “financial literacy” and then unpackage the “science of giving” before determining if the alternate solutions are feasible.

The most quoted financial literacy definition has been developed by the National Financial Educators Council and was selected as the highest-rated definition over all others by Google algorithms.<sup>29</sup> They define it as, “Possessing the skills and knowledge on financial matters to confidently take effective action that best fulfills an individual’s personal, family and global community goals.”<sup>30</sup> The Government Accounting Office (GAO) adds this definition,

The ability to make informed judgments and to take effective actions regarding the current and future use and management of money. It includes the ability to understand financial choices, plan for the future, spend wisely, and manage the challenges associated with life events such as a job loss, saving for retirement, or paying for a child’s education.<sup>31</sup>

When putting these two definitions together, it sounds a lot like the financial lessons taught in scripture, as previously discussed in Chapter 2. The “financial skills and knowledge” invariably could come from the many stewardship lessons contained in Jesus’ parables. “Wise spending” (like budgeting and debt elimination) are discussed in depth in the book of Proverbs. The principles of “management of money” and

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<sup>29</sup> Trevor Stoll, “Financial Literacy Definition: Top 8 Industry Definitions,” NFEC, September 23, 2019, <https://www.financialeducatorsCouncil.org/financial-literacy-definition/>.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Shelby, “The Federal Government’s Role in Improving Financial Literacy,” Government Accountability Office, November 2004, <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0593sp.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Stoll, “Financial Literacy Definition.”

“management of life’s challenges” (like a job loss, saving for retirement, and paying for a child’s education) must be learned in some effective way. The problem is, where are these principles being effectively learned and taught? In school, in the home, through mentors? Perhaps they are not being taught and learned adequately.

Unfortunately, financial *illiteracy* is a plague<sup>32</sup> and therein lies the challenge. In order to achieve financial literacy, people must be effectively taught, and essential learning must take place. Who is most effectively doing this for people now, especially in our churches? The answer is, without argument, programs of old from Ron Blue (*Master Your Money*), Crown Financial (Larry Burkett), and, of course, the modern Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University, among others. While financial advisors are alleviating some financial illiteracy, it is not to the level of need. Pastors are mentoring others, but also have dozens of other areas in which to disciple their congregants.

The National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) says, startlingly, “Education alone cannot create financial well-being.”<sup>33</sup> Evidently, unaided teaching is not enough to overcome the myriad of “socio-economic conditions, racial wealth gap, gender pay inequality, banking deserts, loss of the primary breadwinner or other barriers to financial capability.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ric Edelman, “Cure for Financial Illiteracy? Teach Them When They’re Young,” InvestmentNews, accessed December 18, 2019, <https://www.investmentnews.com/article/20190213/BLOG09/190219975/cure-for-financial-illiteracy-teach-them-when-theyre-young>.

<sup>33</sup> Billy Hensley, “Our Philosophy,” NEFE, January 1, 2019, <https://www.nefe.org/about/our-philosophy/default.aspx>.

<sup>34</sup> Hensley, “Our Philosophy.”



As it relates to this dissertation, it is difficult enough to solve the complex challenges of financial literacy, much less disciple someone on the benefits and need to make a positive difference in our society, through philanthropic generosity. Therefore, we must look at the “science of giving” to efficiently go deeper into possible alternate solutions.

A landmark review done out of the University of Notre Dame regarding religious monetary giving introduces the concept of the science of giving and outlines a comprehensive study of the literature relating to this topic. The study states, “The Hebrew Scriptures teach that men and women are created in the image of God and are for this reason deserving of all the caring and kindness that can be given them. The scriptures also teach that loving others is a duty we owe to God. Christianity has emphasized love of neighbor, deeds of mercy, and charity for the needy.”<sup>35</sup> Reviews spanned several areas of social science, marketing, psychology, economics, and political science wherefore conclusions could be drawn about generosity, and the results are extremely interesting, perhaps suggesting some alternatives to FPU for which we have been searching.

First of all, the review suggested two factors would increase giving immediately, namely attendance (going to church more often) and pledging (simply communicating giving intentions).<sup>36</sup> Apparently, encouraging members to attend more often raises the giving threshold and is irrefutable. This may seem like common knowledge, but the studies backed up their findings with *scores* of studies that proved “religious attendance

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<sup>35</sup> Ryan Lincoln, Christopher Morrissey, and Peter Monday, “Science of Generosity: Religious Giving, A Comprehensive Review of the Literature,” University of Notre Dame, November 30, 1970, [https://generosityresearch.nd.edu/assets/9286/religious\\_giving.pdf](https://generosityresearch.nd.edu/assets/9286/religious_giving.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Lincoln, et al., “Science of Generosity.”

predicts religious giving.”<sup>37</sup> In addition, they highlighted the thought that communication between the donor and the charity elevated the likelihood of increased giving.<sup>38</sup>

Further suggestions to aid in generosity included a suggestion regarding volunteerism. Get folks to volunteer more often, and the writing of checks would follow.<sup>39</sup> It is supposed this may connect with younger generations, as volunteerism seems to be a core value.

In short, get “engagement” to go up with attenders, and giving will invariably follow. Attend more, volunteer more, communicate more, and folks will give more. None of these cost any money, and, notably, none of these is addressed in FPU.

The Notre Dame studies also suggested reciprocity played a part in increased giving potential. This means, potentially dangerously, what benefits does a person get when they give? For instance, “religious satisfaction” is an intangible benefit of giving, which involves joy, peace, and a sense of higher calling.<sup>40</sup> Of course, this religious satisfaction should be avoided if it includes a promise of prosperity, as in a larger house, if one gives.

Could these “free” suggestions be implemented in our stewardship programs in The Evangelical Church, without sending Ramsey Solutions more money? Absolutely.

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<sup>37</sup> Roger Finke, Matt Bahr, and Christopher P. Scheitle, “Toward Explaining Congregational Giving,” *Social Science Research* 35, no. 3 (2006): 620-641.

<sup>38</sup> Dean Hoge, “Introduction: The Problem of Understanding Church Giving,” *Review of Religious Research* 36, no. 2 (1994): 101-110.

<sup>39</sup> Michael H. Hall, “Measurement Issues in Surveys of Giving and Volunteering and Strategies Applied in the Design of Canada’s National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2001): 515-526.

<sup>40</sup> Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Skewness Explained: A Rational Choice Model of Religious Giving,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26, no. 2 (1997): 141-157.

Increasing attendance, pledging to give, and elevating volunteerism are all doable and cost-effective.

Unfortunately, pastors are already trying to implement these strategies and are finding it increasingly difficult to be successful. Attendance is declining in most every denomination in America, not to mention it is declining in churches not associated with any denomination, like community churches, or even house churches.<sup>41</sup> It feels like volunteerism is talked about often, but rarely followed through. But are these suggestions possible to implement in some way? Some of our pastors are seeing positive results, for sure.

These strategies, while potentially ineffective on their own, could be combined with a program like FPU, thus maximizing their potential and should be utilized in churches to disciple generosity. However, in order to aid people toward financial literacy and propel them to live in financial freedom and generous giving toward their local church, more in-depth education seems to be required. Programs like FPU assist the churches to get the attention of folks, while other, less direct stewardship attempts do not.

### **Review, with an Eye on Application**

After both a site visit to Ramsey Solutions Headquarters in January 2019 in Tennessee and attendance at a regional *Momentum* training seminar in New Mexico in April 2019, collaboration with Dave Ramsey's team suggested a deeper dive into our data from The Evangelical Church to answer questions regarding the generosity of our FPU

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<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey M. Jones, "U.S. Church Membership Down Sharply in Past Two Decades," Gallup.com, September 12, 2019, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/248837/church-membership-down-sharply-past-two-decades.aspx>.

graduates. Why did giving initially go down in over half of our churches? Why did giving increase for most churches in years two through four, but decline precipitously in the fifth year? What components could be added to our denomination's stewardship program to help facilitate a greater increase in giving from our FPU graduates, which would be closer to the percentage of increase advertised by Ramsey Solutions in their "Average Attender" statistics fact sheet (giving doubled from 4% of annual income to 8% after successfully graduating from FPU)?

Further cooperation and teamwork with Ramsey's Church Relations Team identified potential missing elements which could dramatically affect results in the giving habits of our graduates of FPU in tithes and offerings for our local churches in our denomination.

1. Sustainability of positive giving results to a local church may be difficult if reinforcement, frequency, and saturation are not addressed in the overall stewardship program.
2. Reinforcement of the biblical stewardship principles taught in FPU must occur annually at a minimum, with the recommendation to preach regularly on this topic, as well as holding small group gatherings to properly reinforce positive giving habits.
3. Frequency of facilitating FPU affects giving results. Adding an additional class noticeably affects the amount of tithes and offerings given to the local church.

4. Saturation of the local church with at least 5% of attenders graduating from FPU will elevate giving. Achieving 20% saturation will significantly affect the church budget.
5. *Momentum* strives to achieve 80% saturation and almost guarantees an increase in tithes and offerings. This program effectively morphs the *culture* of a local church to be more generosity-minded.
6. Improved communication, with careful consideration of the proper wording used when promoting FPU, will be healthier in matching the positive advertising from Ramsey's team on giving with the expectations of local pastors for an increase in tithes and offerings received.

Chapter 6 ties together the previous chapters and makes recommendations for both The Evangelical Church and Ramsey Solutions, better matching pastor expectations and hopes with the possibilities advertised by Ramsey's team of increased giving to local churches after hosting FPU. The application of several possible solutions will be the focus of this next chapter, finishing with a recommendation of whether or not to continue to use FPU as the stewardship course of choice for our churches. The Kingdom Resource Ministries of the Evangelical Church will then be able to determine if FPU is a wise use of our resources and efforts to best disciple our attenders.

## Addendum 1, Chapter 5:

### Impact: The Average American and FPU Members

**THE AVERAGE AMERICAN** - The U.S. is a wealthy country by comparison; however, you may be shocked to see the stats on the amount of debt the average American carries in relation to their income. For many Americans, the financial future is uncertain.

#### TOTAL CONSUMER DEBT IN U.S 12.73 TRILLION

*Nerdwallet 2017, Federal Reserve Q1 data*

\$764 Billion – Credit Cards

\$830 Billion – Other

\$1.17 Trillion – Auto Loans

\$1.34 Trillion – Student Loans

\$8.63 Trillion – Mortgages

#### AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME

*US Census Bureau 2017*

\$59,039

DEBT IS NORMAL. BE WEIRD! 78% of people live paycheck to paycheck

*CareerBuilder 2017*

APPROXIMATELY 66% of AMERICANS struggle to pay \$1,000 emergency

*Associated Press 2016*

#### AVERAGE CREDIT CARD

*CreditCards.com 2017*

16.14% APR

7 OUT OF 10 Couples do not budget consistently

*FPU New Member Survey 2017*

#### AVERAGE CONSUMER DEBT

*Nerdwallet 2017*

\$180,018 Mortgages

\$50,868 Student Loans

\$29,058 Auto Loans

\$16,425 Credit Cards

**FINANCIAL PEACE MEMBERS** - Almost five million people have taken control of their money with the easy-to-follow lessons they learned in *Financial Peace University*. They learned practical ways to create a budget, pay off debt, make wise spending choices, save for the future, and so much more. *The following statistics contain original data from our FPU Postgraduate Survey. Our results are statistically significant with a sample of approximately 3,300 respondents.*

**DEBT PAID IN 90 DAYS**

\$ 5,300

**SAVINGS IN 90 DAYS**

\$2,700

**GRADUATE WITH AT LEAST \$1,000 EMERGENCY FUND**

89%

**HAVE INCREASED FINANCIAL SECURITY AS A RESULT OF FPU**

95%

**PEOPLE WHO HAVE TAKEN FPU**

Nearly 5 Million

**AVERAGE GIVING BY FPU GRADUATES**

Increases from 4% to 8%

**MARRIED COUPLES DO A MONTHLY ZERO-BASED BUDGET AFTER FPU**

81%

**ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

\$0 - \$50K 29%

\$50K - \$75K 26%

\$75K - \$100K 18%

\$100,000+ 27%

“Personal finance is 80% behavior and only 20 percent head knowledge.”

Dave Ramsey

## CHAPTER 6:

### APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

*1 Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box,*

*2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins.*

*3 And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them.*

*4 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”*

***Luke 21:1-4***

In the Pinetops Foundation report called “The Great Opportunity: The American Church in 2050,” Joshua Crossman explains how and if our churches are to thrive, “They must participate in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, calling us to prayer, the Eucharist, preaching, repentance, Scripture and more.”<sup>1</sup> To do all these holy things requires abundant resources, which God wonderfully provides. Financial investments will need to be made for church planting, leadership development, mission outreach, and true discipleship. Thankfully God owns everything, and He will provide.<sup>2</sup> One way for God to provide is through healthy stewardship practices. We need programs like FPU to help teach the masses about managing everything God has trusted us with, so that more resources may be used to further God’s Kingdom and be fruitful for Him in our ministries. Additionally, it is important God’s church learn the important lessons of generosity to live out what Paul states in the Book of Acts, “It is more blessed to give

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Crossman, “The Great Opportunity: The American Church in 2050,” Greatopportunity.org, February 1, 2018, <http://www.greatopportunity.org/#>.

<sup>2</sup> Crossman, “The Great Opportunity,” 118.



than to receive” (chapter 20, verse 35). In our current American consumeristic society, teetering on full individualism and outright selfishness, the time is critical now to teach Godly stewardship principles to his children.

Thanks to technological advances, there has never seemed to be an easier time to give. Followers of Jesus simply need to be disciplined on the proper blessing of being generous. According to author Aaron Smith, “Previous research from the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project has found that one in five US adults (20%) have made a charitable contribution online, and that one in ten (9%) have made a charitable contribution using the text messaging feature on their mobile phone.”<sup>3</sup> We certainly have convenient ways to accomplish giving, supposedly giving us fewer excuses to not give. It rests in the pocket or palm of many of our hands.

Online giving is growing rapidly, automatic electronic fund transfers (EFT) are possible, and cell phone apps make giving an instantaneous convenience. We stand at a moment in time where resources seem to be plentiful and the ability to share these resources plenteous. George Barna, in “What Motivates Christians to Give,” reminds us, “Evangelicals are also more likely than other faith groups to have donated to a church (93%), missions’ organizations (81%) and those in need (72%), showing consistency as a group in whether they give and what they give toward.”<sup>4</sup> This bit of good news is encouraging to our pastors in The Evangelical Church. We seem to be ahead of other faith groups in our giving consistency, though far from fully arriving.

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<sup>3</sup> Sara Atske and Aaron Smith, “Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project,” Pew Research Center, June 13, 2012, <http://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2012/06/13/mobile-philanthropy/>.

<sup>4</sup> George Barna, “What Motivates Christians to Give?” Barna Group, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/motivations-for-generosity/>. George Barna is often quoted in our denomination, especially on attendance and giving trends.

The audience is available. Teaching must follow. Dave Ramsey is valiantly trying to do the teaching and is helping pastors disciple their congregants. Further than that, will hearts be open to generosity in our churches and communities? We have so many treasures; will we share these treasures with others? How we do so will reveal the condition of our hearts, for as scripture says, “For where your treasure is, your heart will be also.”<sup>5</sup> If our instincts as a Board of Kingdom Resources are right, and how we handle our finances is a spiritual indicator, growing in maturity is paramount to becoming more Christ-like, especially with the wise management of our time, talents and treasures.

### **A Story**

Several families at Crossroads Evangelical Church (CEC) are under stress, with rising personal debt and mounting pressure over finances. Pastor Foster observes this growing trend in his denomination (The Evangelical Church) and has a heart to disciple his own flock with biblical stewardship principles, so Dave Ramsey’s FPU class is offered at the church. The church body supports the class by providing scholarships, making snacks, donating free childcare, and purchasing the leader guide, as well as advertising in the local newspaper and on social media. No one at the church seems to mind utilizing their valuable resources to help disciple families in their community, but at the end of the day, the class easily costs the church over \$1,000. Meanwhile, 100% of the money paid by the attenders goes directly to Dave Ramsey’s organization for workbooks and materials. Ramsey makes all the direct profit, while the church sees people’s lives

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 6:21.

changed for the better when the stewardship discipleship principles are followed. It appears to be a win-win, although not all would agree.

Although not his primary purpose for offering the class, Pastor Foster hopes tithes and offerings might eventually increase for CEC, especially since “Baby Step 7” of FPU clearly mandates “Build Wealth and Give.” However, the elders and other leaders of CEC question if there will be some type of measurable return on the investment.

FPU is facilitated at the church for nine weeks; one-third of the families who attend are from outside the church. Dramatic testimonies of debt reduction begin to be heard. Healthy, transformative habits form, including families spending less than they earn. The process of breaking bad habits is not easy, nor is the maturity to stick with the financial teachings. Not every family is wildly successful, but most families are setting money into savings while following the financial Baby Steps of getting out of debt. The church sees an increase in giving over time, which helps them reach out into their community even further.

One couple is so turned on by the success of their financial growth, so inspired by the positive difference FPU made in their personal lives, so thankful for stress reduction in their family regarding money issues, and so impressed with how these stewardship principles helped their family business, they volunteer to be the facilitator for their church’s next FPU class. Eventually, they teach numerous additional classes to dozens and dozens of families in their small town, some from other churches, some from no church at all. By word of mouth, reports of the class spread infectiously as friends tell their friends about FPU. Two classes a year are offered and fill rapidly.

Their church reaches a 20% saturation of attenders who have taken FPU. The class is offered even more often, since alumni are allowed to attend any class in the future for free for positive reinforcement. Their pastors preach on stewardship annually and help sessions for small groups and individuals are offered for free, including the writing of personal last will and testaments, which impacts local families even more positively. Momentum is gaining, so the church reaches out to help other churches. They send their pastor, once a month, through two large private donations, to disciple other churches in many other states nationwide. FPU is encouraged at 42 churches across the denomination, stewardship seminars are held, sermons are preached, hundreds of wills are written. Approximately 20,000 people are eventually disciplined on stewardship principles.

This story is true, only the name CEC is not Crossroads Evangelical Church; rather, it is Columbus Evangelical Church in Columbus, Montana. The name of their pastor is not Foster; it is Jay Forseth. CEC released his time for one trip a month and sent him all over America, between the time period of 2014 to 2018, at a total cost of about \$50,000, which was funded by two \$25,000 donations. This story served as the inspiration for this dissertation.

### **Application**

To be clear, teaching biblical stewardship principles should not be about getting more money for our local churches. That is not the main motivation for any pastor researching FPU, especially in our denomination. As Ken Shaffer pointed out in the New

Mexico Momentum Seminar, it's all about discipleship.<sup>6</sup> In fact, return on investment is not as important as return on discipleship. As the Gospel writer in Luke says, "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?"<sup>7</sup> Local pastors want to make better disciples, not just better givers. However, the late Larry Burkett said, "How we handle money is a spiritual indicator."<sup>8</sup> This has upheld to be true, at least in our denomination. The way one handles their personal finances seems to indicate spiritual maturity.

Therefore, increased spiritual maturity occurs when we focus on making disciples, which includes teaching on stewardship. Shaffer says, "With good stewardship, everything gets better: Margin, ministry, mission, maturity, and marriages."<sup>9</sup> Discipleship involves stewardship, among a myriad of other spiritual disciplines.

Additional research raised further proof of our need to disciple church attenders in biblical stewardship principles. Career Builder states, "78% of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck."<sup>10</sup> The 2019 partial government shutdown in the U.S. proved this statistic to be true, as countless federal employees had a financial crisis after missing their

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<sup>6</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum: A Church Wide Stewardship Movement," attended April 11, 2019. Brent Spicer from Ramsey Solutions is the person responsible for allowing this author the opportunity to be involved in this event.

<sup>7</sup> Luke 16:11.

<sup>8</sup> Larry Burkett, *Dollars and Sense: What the Bible Says about You and Your Money* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1993), 195. Interestingly, this resource was given to the author by neighbor as a wedding gift decades ago.

<sup>9</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum," attended April 11, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Ladan Hayes, "Living Paycheck to Paycheck Is a Way of Life for Majority of U.S. Workers, According to New CareerBuilder Survey," Career Builder, August 24, 2017, <http://press.careerbuilder.com/2017-08-24-Living-Paycheck-to-Paycheck-is-a-Way-of-Life-for-Majority-of-U-S-Workers-According-to-New-CareerBuilder-Survey>.

first regular paycheck, not to mention what happened over the full 35 days of shutdown, resulting in multiple missed paychecks for federal employees.<sup>11</sup>

Nerdwallet cries loudly about personal debt loads in the U.S., “Americans carry a staggering average credit card debt of \$15,561.”<sup>12</sup> This is overwhelming, particularly for young couples, a key demographic of FPU attendees. In addition, “Americans carry an overwhelming average student loan debt of \$47,671.”<sup>13</sup> No wonder FPU attempts to teach discipleship principles in Christian stewardship. Putting the two together, without factoring in additional consumer debt, and the average person is over \$60,000 indebted, not to mention doubling that for married couples! This doesn’t even factor in car payments or home mortgages.

GoBanking approximates, “58% of Americans would struggle to cover even a \$1,000 emergency because they have less than \$1,000 in savings.”<sup>14</sup> Personal experience concurs in observing struggling couples trying to find funds to cover car repairs, medical emergencies, house maintenance, or even regular children’s activities expenses like traveling sports teams.

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<sup>11</sup> Jacob Pramuk, “Government Jobs Were Considered Stable. Now the Damage from the Shutdown Could Cause Workers to Flee,” CNBC, January 25, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/01/25/government-shutdown-worker-missed-paychecks-could-hurt-recruitment.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Claire Tsosie and Erin El Issa, “NerdWallet’s 2018 Household Debt Study,” NerdWallet, December 10, 2018, <https://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/average-credit-card-debt-household/>. Unfortunately, this figure rises year after year and has certainly gone up drastically since 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Tsosie and El Issa, “NerdWallet’s 2018 Household Debt Study.”

<sup>14</sup> Cameron Huddleston, “58% Of Americans Have Less Than \$1,000 in Savings,” GOBankingRates, December 21, 2018, <https://www.gobankingrates.com/saving-money/savings-advice/average-american-savings-account-balance/>. This \$1,000 in savings is Dave Ramsey’s Baby Step number 1.

Unfortunately, being a member of a local church congregation does not make someone immune from the downfall of these statistics; the financial habits of church families essentially mirror American society on the whole. For instance, George Barna Research states, “Just 5% of adult Americans give a tenth of their income to non-profit organizations, and among born-again Christians, only 12% tithe.”<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, the number of non-church-attenders who finish FPU is a substantial number, totaling 18% of each class, according to Dave Ramsey’s research team.<sup>16</sup>

Relevant Magazine believes, “If members of Christian churches actually gave 10% of their income, an additional \$165 billion would be available for kingdom work.”<sup>17</sup> Imagine that for just a moment. Many local pastors have tried to preach on this but come away discouraged. Very discouraged. Empty Tomb says, “On average, evangelical Christians give away less than 3% of their income, which is the same as the average non-Christian.”<sup>18</sup> This percentage has not increased for decades, and may actually go down if the U.S. government removes tax benefits for giving toward non-profits.

These additional research points illustrate the continuing need for quality discipleship on biblical stewardship principles. Families seem to get further and further behind, especially in crushing debt loads, as well as insufficient or maybe even non-

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<sup>15</sup> George Barna, “American Donor Trends,” Barna Group, June 3, 2013, <https://www.barna.com/research/american-donor-trends/>.

<sup>16</sup> Dave Ramsey, “2016 FPU Annual Member Survey,” [daveramsey.com](https://www.daveramsey.com/research/millennials), July 2, 2016, <https://www.daveramsey.com/research/millennials>.

<sup>17</sup> Mike Holmes, “What Would Happen If the Church Tithed,” *Relevant Magazine* (March 8, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> John Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, *The State of Church Giving through 2015: Understanding the Times* (Champaign, IL: Empty Tomb, Inc., 2017).

existent savings plans. This does not even factor in the deficient retirement funds typical Americans are putting aside for their alarmingly expensive retirement years.

Ramsey Solutions believes, as evidenced in their core values statement, “If we are faithful in the little things, we will achieve excellence in the ordinary.”<sup>19</sup> Larry Burkett says, “You cannot be right with God, and wrong with money.”<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, reinforcing the teaching of FPU in a local church with greater frequency, while achieving higher saturation of the percentage of members at each church, will positively affect the giving of both tithes and offerings. These three factors combined will increase positive sustainability of giving for the local church. It will also better match pastor expectations to the Ramsey statistic of attenders doubling their generosity, including gifts to their local church.

Passionate about teaching stewardship, this author wishes to get it right when discipling both the Christian and non-Christian about money. This dissertation research hopes to help both the local church pastor, as well as Dave Ramsey’s team, meet expectations to this end. The recommendations Ramsey Solutions provided of digging deeper into the effectiveness of FPU on the giving habits of many attenders at 42 Evangelical Churches has revealed helpful solutions.

Simply teaching FPU an extra time at each church might increase tithes and offerings. Implementing *Momentum* would exponentially change the financial landscape of our churches. Increased giving could revolutionize a local church budget, freeing up significant dollars for further kingdom fruitfulness. And that is what this is all about.

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<sup>19</sup> Ramsey Solutions, “Momentum,” 50.

<sup>20</sup> Larry Burkett, *The Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 48.



### **Detractors of Financial Peace University and Specifically of Dave Ramsey**

Financial Peace University and Dave Ramsey are not without detractors; one does not have to search long to find people who are not fans of his methods. In this day of social media, countless people share their unfiltered opinion, sometimes mercilessly and without grace, so it is not a surprise to find some who have an issue with the FPU program and its founder. Any program of this far-reaching magnitude and scope, with over 5 million participants, will never have a perfect satisfaction result.

Many people complain about his harshness with his radio callers, calling him arrogant and brash.<sup>21</sup> One can sense the radio host's frustration and point-blank direct approach, and his tone of voice may come across as mean. Ramsey himself admits, interestingly enough, in an article titled "The Gospel According to Dave," "I'm impatient.... It's hard for me to listen to people go on and on..."<sup>22</sup>

After meeting him face to face in Nashville, as well as observing him in action at his headquarters, this author does not concur with the notion that Ramsey is mean-spirited. Although not perfect, Ramsey swings for the fences in trying to make a lasting positive financial and personal difference for countless families, and hits home runs in the process. Doing a radio program for decades must be exhausting, while hearing from callers with the same "stupid" behaviors, as he calls them, people seem to exhibit continuously. In addition, having over 800 employees must be stressful, not to mention complicated, so it is necessary to start with giving grace where grace is due. It is also

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<sup>21</sup> Brian Fourman, "Hope for Your Financial Journey and Beyond," Luke 14:28, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://luke1428.com/start-here/>.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Drury, "The Gospel According to Dave," Nashville Scene, May 31, 2007, <https://www.nashvillescene.com/news/article/13014787/the-gospel-according-to-dave>.

necessary to allow for holy discontent on the part of Ramsey, as he sometimes has to respond to certain folks exactly as they are: ignorant, unwise, and even sinful.

This project will not further address personality concerns regarding Ramsey. No one wins there. This is not to let FPU and Ramsey too easily off the hook. All leaders should fall under proper forms of accountability. Hence, the earlier discussion mentioning Ramsey falling under the watchful eye of the ECFA, Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. However, one might appropriately wonder, are there legitimate and specific concerns with Ramsey's methods and FPU program, including the "7 Baby Steps"? In our denomination, one constructive criticism that has been heard, specifically with former Western Conference Superintendent Steve Strutz,<sup>23</sup> centers on the nomenclature and heart behind Baby Step 7: Build wealth and give generously.

Build wealth? Superintendent Strutz was very grateful for the emphasis on generosity, especially hearing Ramsey's original FPU 13-week program did not originally contain this emphasis, but he had questions regarding the "build wealth" nomenclature. Specifically, where in the Bible would it command to build wealth, as in, build an "empire" or build a personal earthly "kingdom" (with a little k)? It's doubtful Ramsey was asserting that, but one does wonder if the Bible would command such an earthly cause like wealth building, citing Martin Luther in saying, "Wealth is the smallest thing on earth, the least gift that God has bestowed on mankind."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Discussed at his home church, Faith Evangelical Church in Billings, Montana. Superintendent Strutz expressed concern for this baby step when the stewardship seminar was held and FPU started in the Spring of 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Mike Federle, "Forbes Quotes: Thoughts on the Business of Life," Forbes (Forbes Magazine, December 20, 2019), <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/6683/>.

In a search on googlescholar.com, there were 84 reviews of Dave Ramsey's book, *The Total Money Makeover*.<sup>25</sup> The negative comments associated with this book centered around four main issues. In order of the quantity of comments: Questioning if a stated 12% rate of return was realistic for investments, probing the "Debt Snowball" strategy of paying the smallest debts off first before highest interest loans, disagreement over his investment advice toward stock mutual funds as opposed to bonds, and the controversy surrounding the cost of Dave Ramsey's personal home. The first three will be investigated further, but the final one concerning the lavishness of his house will be disregarded, as it seems irrelevant to this research.

First of all, regarding Ramsey's expectations of graduates receiving a 12% rate of return on investments through mutual funds, Morgan Korn refers to author Helaine Olen, writer of the book *Pound Foolish: Exposing the Dark Side of the Personal Finance Industry*, quoted in Yahoo Finance stating that a 12% return is unrealistically high.<sup>26</sup> Korn goes on to say raising hopes for such a high level of return could be harmfully misleading, especially at retirement time when a person's portfolio comes up painfully shy. Dave Ramsey has obviously heard of this detraction before, as he responds on his own website:

"Can you really get a 12% return on mutual fund investments, even in today's market" Where does the idea of a 12% return on investment come from? When Dave says you can expect to make a 12% return on your investments, he's using a real number that's based on the historical average annual return of the S&P (Standard and Poor) 500. The current average annual return from 1923 (the year

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<sup>25</sup> "Articles Cited: The Total Money Makeover: Classic Edition: A Proven Plan for Financial Fitness," [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com). Accessed January 1, 2020. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=13309902310827307321&as\\_sdt=5,27&scioldt=0,27&hl=en](https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=13309902310827307321&as_sdt=5,27&scioldt=0,27&hl=en).

<sup>26</sup> Morgan Korn, "Don't Get Your Money Advice from Suze Orman, Dave Ramsey: Pound Foolish Author," Yahoo! Finance, January 14, 2013, <https://finance.yahoo.com/blogs/daily-ticker/don-t-money-advice-suze-orman-dave-ramsey-122754956.html>.

of the S&P's inception) through 2016 is 12.25%. From 1992 to 2016, the S&P's average is 10.72%. From 1987 to 2016, it's 11.66%. So you can see, 12% is not a magic number. Based on the history of the market, it's a reasonable expectation for your long-term investments.<sup>27</sup>

In the *New York Times*, author Ann Carrns says, "Even his critics give Mr. Ramsey credit for helping thousands of people shed debt and build savings. But when it comes to his investment advice, financial advisers say he is wildly optimistic."<sup>28</sup> Carrns and others would probably be more supportive if the rate of return was somewhere between 8 and 10%, which is realistic in planning one's future.

One noted difference is that Ramsey is using a different perspective (average annual rate of return), than Carrns (annualized rate of return). From the same article, Thomas De Jong, a certified financial planner, explains, "The annualized rate of return, sometimes called the compound annual growth rate, is a more precise way to measure investments."<sup>29</sup> Basically, Ramsey simply uses a percentage from each year, and averages them together. Carrns uses the percentage from the life of the investment, and gets one average. Strangely, these two numbers are not the same, with Carrns' coming out more conservatively.

Secondly, when discussing the next most common disagreement with Ramsey's strategies, it is important to consider his thoughts behind the advice to pay smallest debts off first before paying off highest interest loans. This may not appear at first glance to be controversial; however, following his advice could end up costing a person more money

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<sup>27</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Return on Investment; the 12% Reality," [daveramsey.com](https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/the-12-reality), October 29, 2019), <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/the-12-reality>.

<sup>28</sup> Ann Carrns, "Dave Ramsey's 12% Solution," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2011, <https://bucks.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/13/dave-ramseys-12-solution/>.

<sup>29</sup> Carrns, "Dave Ramsey's 12% Solution."

in the long run. On paper, there is no question the savings on paying higher interest loans which are in larger sizes would be more advantageous. However, motivation is higher when people experience small victories. The National Bureau on Economic Research (NBER) concurs.<sup>30</sup> Essentially, the motivational benefits of experiencing victories, however small, are more beneficial in the long run and carry a higher chance of continued positive behavior. In this case, paying off a small debt, regardless of the interest rate, provides endorphins, which propel a person to continue down their positive road. Personally, this author does not feel like this criticism is much of a big detractor. Whatever gains positive motion and gets the snowball rolling should be considered an allowance. In addition, some flexibility may be required on following every Ramsey rule, depending on geographic location and local culture, for instance. We understand that a cookie-cutter approach does not apply to every family situation, as targets often change.

Finally, the third challenge to Ramsey centers around stocks versus bonds, where Ramsey takes higher risks and recommends a balanced portfolio of mainly stocks through mutual funds. Conservative investors cry foul on this strategy, especially since we have seen economic downturns already this century. “Generally you want a portfolio that gets safer as you age, with stocks but an increasing tilt into bonds and cash,” says Christine Benz, director of personal finance at the fund research group Morningstar.<sup>31</sup>

Ramsey obviously is bullish on stocks, relying on his previously mentioned statistics from the S&P 500. One may certainly understand consternation if an investor

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<sup>30</sup> Alexander L. Brown and Joanna N. Lahey, “Small Victories: Creating Intrinsic Motivation in Savings and Debt Reduction,” NBER, May 15, 2014, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w20125>.

<sup>31</sup> Felix Salmon and Susie Poppick, “Save Like Dave Ramsey... Just Don’t Invest Like Him,” Money, September 29, 2013, <https://money.com/save-like-dave-ramsey-just-dont-invest-like-him/>.

desperately needed their retirement dollars immediately, perhaps wrongly timed with an economic downturn.

Should The Evangelical Church disregard all of Dave Ramsey's program because of these trials? Could we be sued for malpractice in endorsing his strategies? We would be most concerned if we hurt the witness of Jesus Christ by allowing bad advice to be circulated in our communities. At the end of the day, we do not feel these are deal breakers, nor should we throw out the baby with the bath water. We wholeheartedly will continue to assess the accuracy and reliability of Ramsey's claims, will encourage our graduates to adapt according to their own special situational needs, and hold FPU properly accountable.

It can be argued these disagreements are not to the level of being irresponsible. There is much good we are seeing out of having FPU as part of our stewardship emphasis, especially with saving, debt reduction, and personal budgeting. Basically, we have agreed with the stance of John Wesley, "Get all you can without hurting your soul, your body, or your neighbor. Save all you can, cutting off every needless expense. Give all you can. Be glad to give, and ready to distribute; laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may attain eternal life."<sup>32</sup>

### **Recommendation**

Should The Evangelical Church continue to support the teaching of Financial Peace University as a vital part of its stewardship program? Do the benefits outweigh the

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<sup>32</sup> Mike Federle, "Forbes Quotes: Thoughts on the Business of Life," Forbes Magazine, December 20, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/quotes/5543/>.

misunderstandings as far as giving to the local churches is concerned? The simple answer is, yes, certainly.

Why? This author believes it is responsible leadership to endorse FPU, especially when combined with greater reinforcement, frequency, and saturation in the local church. At the same time, clearer communication on expectations and hopes for local pastors should be better paired with what Ramsey Solutions is stating about giving habits doubling from FPU graduates. Although our results in The Evangelical Church are not perfect, they are undeniably optimistic. Caution is required if a church decides to host FPU only once, and sometimes there are certain outside influences present that take a church off track, but if a church follows through and facilitates FPU, there is positive fruit to be obtained. Families will be disciplined, debts will usually be settled, money will be stocked away, and generosity will be readily available.

FPU should be endorsed. It has earned that right in our denomination. Who else is producing that much stewardship fruit? In reality, the giving results should speak for themselves, even with our marked decrease in year four. Most of our churches saw an increase in giving, but even more than that, over 20,000 folks were disciplined on biblical stewardship principles.

Why would we *not* endorse FPU, especially when clearer communication goes out to our pastors regarding the hopes and expectations surrounding giving habits? The message of the KRM Board should be to teach FPU and reinforce its principles when preaching and in small groups. In fact, the Board recommends teaching FPU more frequently and saturating the congregation and community by graduating over 20% of the church body. Then, as icing on top of the cake, implement *Momentum* and watch this

almost unstoppable force grow into a generosity machine poised to make a lasting difference for the ministries of each local church, unleashing generous givers who understand we are investing in God's eternal kingdom. Why? Because all these resources belong to God, they serve a heavenly purpose, and we can't take them with us, for "Naked we came into the world, and naked we will depart."<sup>33</sup> Why else? To put it succinctly, we are doing all this "as unto the Lord"<sup>34</sup> and for the "glory of God"<sup>35</sup> as we "lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."<sup>36</sup>

### **Review of Chapter 6 and Conclusion**

1. Technology has allowed for increased generosity opportunities through online giving and cell phone applications.
2. The late Larry Burkett stated the way a person handles their finances may be an indicator of spiritual maturity.
3. The story behind this dissertation is true, a real-life illustration from Columbus Evangelical Church in Columbus, Montana.
4. Most Americans live paycheck to paycheck and carry staggering amounts of personal debt. In addition, most do not have even \$1,000 in savings, most are

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<sup>33</sup> Job 1:21.

<sup>34</sup> Colossians 3:23-24.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 6:19-21.



underfunded in planning for retirement, and most do not come even close to giving 10% to charity.

5. Therefore, the KRM Board in The Evangelical Church heartily endorses Dave Ramsey's FPU, as it has proven success in debt reduction, building savings, investing in retirement, and building wealth so that generosity increases.

In closing, there is support through this research for Dave Ramsey's "Momentum Theorem of  $Fi/T(G)=Unstoppable\ Momentum$ ,"<sup>37</sup> or, "Focused intensity over time, multiplied by God, equals Unstoppable Momentum!"<sup>38</sup> This appears to be workable in The Evangelical Church, and the data supports such an attempt. Scripture agrees. In the book of Proverbs, it says, "Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it."<sup>39</sup> Not to mention, Luke writes in Acts, plainly explaining, "...remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"<sup>40</sup>

Amen and Amen.

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<sup>37</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum," 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ramsey Solutions, "Momentum."

<sup>39</sup> Proverbs 13:11.

<sup>40</sup> Acts 20:35.

APPENDIX A:  
FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY SUPPORTING MATERIALS

**Dave Ramsey's 7 Baby Steps<sup>1</sup>**

**What Are the Baby Steps?**

Dave Ramsey's 7 Baby Steps will show you how to save for emergencies, pay off all your debt *for good*, and build wealth. It's not a fairy tale. It works every single time!

**Baby Step 1: Save \$1,000 for Your Starter Emergency Fund**

In this first step, your goal is to save \$1,000 as fast as you can. Your emergency fund will cover those unexpected life events you can't plan for. And there are plenty of them. You don't want to dig a deeper hole while you're trying to work your way out of debt!

**Baby Step 2: Pay Off All Debt (Except the House) Using the Debt Snowball**

Next, it's time to pay off the cars, the credit cards, and your student loans. Start by listing all of your debts except for your mortgage. Put them in order by balance from smallest to largest. This is called the debt snowball method, and you'll use it to knock out your debts one by one.

**Baby Step 3: Save 3–6 Months of Expenses in a Fully Funded Emergency Fund**

You've paid off your debt! Don't slow down now. Take that money you were throwing at your debt and build a fully funded emergency fund that covers 3–6 months of your expenses. This will protect you against life's bigger surprises, like the loss of a job or your car breaking down, without slipping back into debt.

**Baby Step 4: Invest 15% of Your Household Income in Retirement**

It's time to get serious about retirement—no matter your age. Take 15% of your gross household income and start investing it into your retirement. Start with your company's 401(k) plan and receive the full employer match. Invest the rest into Roth IRAs—one for you and one for your spouse (if you're married).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.daveramsey.com/dave-ramsey-7-baby-steps>.

**Baby Step 5: Save for Your Children's College Fund**

By this step, you've paid off all debts (except the house) and started saving for retirement. Next, it's time to save for your children's college expenses (that is, if they make it through Algebra II and Chemistry unscathed). We recommend 529 college savings plans or ESAs (Education Savings Accounts).

**Baby Step 6: Pay Off Your Home Early**

Now, bring it all home. Baby Step 6 is the big dog! Your mortgage is the only thing between you and complete freedom from debt. Can you imagine your life with no house payment? Any extra money you can put toward your mortgage could save you tens (or even hundreds) of thousands in interest.

**Baby Step 7: Build Wealth and Give**

You know what people with no debt can do? Anything they want! The last step is the most fun. You can live and give like no one else! Keep building wealth and become insanely generous. Leave an inheritance for your kids and their kids. Now, that's what we call leaving a legacy!

## APPENDIX B:

### ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

#### **A Look Inside the Nine Lessons of *Financial Peace University*<sup>2</sup>**

##### **Introduction**

If you think about it, money touches every nook and cranny of our lives. We measure our successes and failures by it. We use it to fill our gas tanks, pay for groceries, and keep the lights on. And just when we start to feel like we have the hang of it... something breaks, someone gets sick, or the banks call asking for their money back. Whether you've got your money tied up in credit cards, student loans, that massive car payment, or even those unwanted medical bills, it all adds up—and fast.

Most of us have been there. Have you? But here's the thing: You can't stay there. We get it. It feels like you're stuck in a constant cycle, living paycheck to paycheck and anxiously wondering when the next shoe will drop. Guess what? Dave Ramsey has been there. But the best part is that he used his story to impact millions of other stories with the hope and help of *Financial Peace University*.

##### **Dave's Story**

You could say Dave Ramsey had it all. At just 26 years old, he was making \$20,000 a month in the real estate business. With that kind of money, Dave and his wife, Sharon, were able to do all the things they'd always dreamed of doing.

You've heard the phrase, "Keeping up with the Joneses." Well, if you knew Dave and Sharon Ramsey then, they were the Joneses. Just about everything in their lives seemed perfect—from the outside. But the truth? They were deep in debt. You can probably guess what happened next. Life came crashing down around them when the bank called his notes. Dave and Sharon had less than six months to pay back millions of dollars. So, they did what anyone in this situation would do—they sold everything.

But it wasn't fast enough. On the night of September 22, 1988, Dave and Sharon signed bankruptcy papers while sitting at their old oak kitchen table. They were terrified. Dave says, "I didn't have any answers. I was the guy that had all the answers."

##### ***Financial Peace University: The Beginning***

In the midst of his money problems, Dave started pursuing what God had to say about money. Even though he had the fancy finance degrees and letters behind his name, he looked to the Bible for any wisdom he could find. Comparing biblical wisdom with what he learned in business school, Dave came up with a new plan. That plan included

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/take-control-of-your-money-financial-peace-university>.

making (and sticking to) a budget, saving an emergency fund (for when Murphy comes knocking), and getting and staying out of debt.

With his experience crawling out of bankruptcy fresh in his mind and a plan to help others avoid paying the stupid tax (like he had to), Dave put on his best suit and started a class called *Life After Debt*. This was his way of sharing everything he learned the hard way. When five families showed up—later growing to 350 families over the next three years—he knew he had hit a nerve and found a need.

### ***Financial Peace University: Today***

Since its inception, *Financial Peace University* (FPU) has seen quite a few changes. But each change was made with one goal: to help more people find HOPE. From Dave's very first class, which lasted a whopping 26 weeks, to the next update, which took the course down to 13 weeks, to the current nine-week course, that goal has remained the same.

This new year, we're rolling out one of our biggest updates yet. We've revised the lessons to help you get more out of each Baby Step! Plus, you'll get expert financial advice not only from Dave, but also from his daughter and best-selling author, Rachel Cruze, and retirement expert and best-selling author Chris Hogan.

You'll learn how to save an emergency fund, get out of debt, save for retirement and college, pay off the house, build wealth, and give generously. It's a lot to work, but it's all incredibly motivating—and rewarding! Don't worry, Dave simplifies the process by taking you through the 7 Baby Steps. In fact, you'll find that the first four lessons explain the Baby Steps to a T so you can get started right away! Believe us—once you get moving on the first Baby Step, momentum and your own intensity will keep you going.

Five million people, huh? Yup. *Five million!* You're probably wondering, *How has this one program changed so many lives?* Good question. You should probably know that *Financial Peace University* isn't the answer to your money problems. It's not going to do the work for you. But *Financial Peace University* is the *plan* to get you there. Dave always says that personal finance is 80% behavior and 20% knowledge. That means when you change your behavior—just like Dave did over two decades ago—you *will* start to win with money.

### **Lesson 1: *Baby Step 1 & Budgeting*, Save \$1,000 for Your Starter Emergency Fund**

Baby Step 1 is all about having a plan for when Murphy comes knocking. And believe us—he *will* come knocking. It's time to have a plan for when those annoying, but inevitable, emergencies arise.

This lesson will also give you a deep dive into something that makes people cringe—the budget. FYI: Making a budget (and sticking to it) is the key to financial success. It helps you learn how to take control of your money once and for all as you journey the road to financial peace. And if you haven't heard, we have a *really* good tool for that. It's called EveryDollar Plus. With this tool, you can create a budget in less than 10 minutes. Not only that, you can sync your bank account directly to the app so you can

easily track your transactions. When you sign up for your FPU membership, you'll get one-year access for free!

### **Lesson 2: *Baby Step 2, Pay Off All Debt (Except the House) Using the Debt Snowball***

The borrower is indeed slave to the lender (Proverbs 22:7 NIV). In this lesson, Dave shines light on what debt is (yup, that student loan *does* count as debt) and debunks common myths about debt. You'll learn about our proven method, the debt snowball, that has helped millions attack their debt and say goodbye to it for good. You might need to find yourself a sharp pair of scissors for this one because we're cutting up plastic.

### **Lesson 3: *Baby Step 3, 3–6 Months of Expenses in a Fully Funded Emergency Fund***

Now that you've got your starter emergency fund saved and your debt paid off, it's time to save even more! In this lesson, you'll learn the importance of saving 3–6 months of expenses in your fully funded emergency fund. Baby Step 3 keeps you from going back into debt when an emergency arises.

### **Lesson 4: *Baby Steps 4, 5, 6 & 7, Baby Step 4: Invest 15% of Your Household Income in Retirement, Baby Step 5: Save for Your Children's College Fund, Baby Step 6: Pay Off Your Home Early, Baby Step 7: Build Wealth and Give***

Now that your past is in the past, it's time to start investing in your future! And this is where it starts to get really fun! You've put in a lot of hard work to get here so now you'll see it pay off! Plus, doesn't retiring with dignity and giving like no one else sound really, really good?

### **Lesson 5: *Buyer Beware***

Discover how to stay strong against marketing tactics that try to get you to spend more money. No more of those "gotcha" schemes!

### **Lesson 6: *The Role of Insurance***

Protect your family with the insurance you need.

### **Lesson 7: *Retirement Planning***

Learn how to plan for your retirement and save for your children's college.

**Lesson 8: Real Estate & Mortgages**

Start understanding mortgages and whether or not you should buy, sell or rent.

**Lesson 9: The Great Misunderstanding**

In this final lesson of FPU, you'll learn the biggest money secret Dave's discovered along the way.

## APPENDIX C:

### RAMSEY SOLUTIONS SUPPORTING MATERIALS

#### Who is Dave Ramsey?<sup>3</sup>

America's trusted voice on money and business, Dave Ramsey is a personal money-management expert and extremely popular national radio personality. His seven best-selling books—*Financial Peace*, *More Than Enough*, *The Total Money Makeover*, *EntreLeadership*, *Dave Ramsey's Complete Guide to Money*, *The Legacy Journey* and *Smart Money Smart Kids*—have sold more than 11 million copies combined.

By age 26 he had established a \$4 million real estate portfolio, only to lose it by age 30. Using the wisdom he gained, Ramsey rebuilt his financial life and now teaches others how to be responsible with their money, so they can acquire enough wealth to take care of loved ones, retire with dignity, and give generously to others.

In 1992, Ramsey founded The Lampo Group, LLC to provide financial counseling, through various means, to anyone who wants to better understand the principles of proper money management. Twenty years later, the company has grown from a card table in his living room to more than 800 team members and has been voted one of the “Best Places to Work” in Nashville numerous times. In 2014, the company rebranded to become Ramsey Solutions as part of an ongoing plan for growth and longevity. Ramsey runs a multi-million-dollar company with a nationally recognized brand, but he defines success by the number of lives changed through his message of hope.

Ramsey offers that life-changing message as host of a nationally syndicated radio program, *The Dave Ramsey Show*, which is heard by 14 million listeners each week on more than 600 radio stations and digitally through podcasts, online audio streaming and a 24-hour online streaming video channel. In 2009, he was honored as a National Association of Broadcaster's Marconi Award winner. Ramsey was inducted into the NAB Broadcasting Hall of Fame in 2013 and the National Radio Hall of Fame in 2015.

He is the creator of *Financial Peace University* (FPU), a program that helps people dump their debt, take control of their money, and learn new behaviors around money that are founded on commitment and accountability. More than 5 million people have attended *Financial Peace University*, *Legacy Journey* and *Smart Money Smart Kids* classes at their workplace, church, military base, local nonprofit organization or community group.

Ramsey offers his message of hope through a variety of mediums and products. More than a million people have attended a live event, including more than 40,000 *EntreLeadership* participants. His high school and college curriculums are offered in more than 16,000 schools and educational institutions. The *Dave Says* syndicated column is available to more than 8 million readers monthly. Thousands of children have enjoyed his entertaining and educational book series. [daveramsey.com](http://daveramsey.com) offers free informational

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.daveramsey.com/pr/about-dave-ramsey>.



articles and streaming of *The Dave Ramsey Show*. Ramsey earned his Bachelor of Science in finance and real estate from the University of Tennessee.

### **Ramsey Solutions Company Bio<sup>4</sup>**

Ramsey Solutions is committed to helping people regain control of their money, build wealth, grow their leadership skills, and enhance their lives through personal development. The company's success is defined by the number of people whose lives are changed by a message of hope. Through a variety of mediums including live events, publishing, syndicated columns and a nationally syndicated radio show, Ramsey Solutions uses common-sense education to empower people to win at life and money. Millions of families have graduated from Financial Peace University classes across the country, and Ramsey Solutions' world-class speakers have brought vision, inspiration, and encouragement to more than a million more. Voted among Nashville's best places to work ten times, Ramsey Solutions employs more than 800 team members focused and dedicated to doing work that matters.

### **The Dave Ramsey Show**

The third largest radio talk show in America, *The Dave Ramsey Show* is heard by more than 14 million listeners each week on more than 600 radio stations, The Dave Ramsey Show podcast, SiriusXM, iHeartRadio, and a 24-hour online streaming video channel. The caller-driven show features Ramsey's advice on avoiding money mistakes and his step-by-step plan to get out of them. The Dave Ramsey Show celebrated 25 years on the air in 2017.

### **EveryDollar**

EveryDollar is an online budget tool and app that makes it easy for people to quickly set up and maintain their household budget in a simple and accessible way. With EveryDollar, users have the ability to create customized monthly budgets, seamlessly track expenses, income and savings. EveryDollar Plus offers bank connectivity, allowing users to check account balances and stream transactions directly from their bank to their budget. The EveryDollar app is available for both iOS and Android devices. EveryDollar was launched in March 2015 and now has more than two million users.

### **SmartDollar**

SmartDollar is an online, turnkey financial wellness program that teaches employees to proactively take control of their money and completely change their financial futures. Featuring financial experts, Dave Ramsey, Chris Hogan, and Rachel Cruze, SmartDollar allows participants to track their progress as they move through the short video lessons and tools which can be accessed within the office, at home, or on the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.daveramsey.com/pr/company-bio>.

go via computer, tablet, or mobile device. SmartDollar can be used as a financial wellness benefit within individual companies or may be provided by retirement plan advisors, record keepers and health wellness providers.

### **Financial Peace University**

Through common-sense principles and small group accountability, *Financial Peace University* (FPU) gives people the tools they need to change their behavior and succeed financially. FPU lessons include best-selling authors and money experts, Rachel Cruze and Chris Hogan. More than 5 million people across the country have participated in *Financial Peace University*. FPU, along with *The Legacy Journey* and *Smart Money Smart Kids* classes, are offered at church and community organizations nationwide.

### **Foundations in Personal Finance**

Ramsey Solutions' *Foundations in Personal Finance* is an easy to use, turnkey curriculum that teaches students the value of saving, spending, and giving to guide them down the path of financial literacy. More than four million students have taken *Foundations in Personal Finance* in middle schools, high schools and universities nationwide. *Foundations in Personal Finance* can be used as a primary or supplemental resource to fulfill requirements in mathematics, economics, family consumer science, business mathematics and personal finance.

### **EntreLeadership**

EntreLeadership is the process of leading to cause a venture to grow and prosper, combining the innovative spirit of an entrepreneur with the passion and drive of a leader. This philosophy is how Ramsey Solutions CEO and nationally syndicated radio talk show host Dave Ramsey has grown his highly successful company and trained his leadership team since day one. Through national events, a top-rated podcast, a best-selling book and an online coaching and mentorship program, EntreLeadership equips business owners to grow themselves, their team and their profits.

### **Business Boutique**

Created by Ramsey Personality and certified business coach Christy Wright, *Business Boutique* helps women business owners overcome the obstacles they face and arms them with a proven plan for running and growing their business. Through a best-selling book, podcast, events and an online learning academy, Business Boutique has equipped thousands of women make money doing what they love.

### **Ramsey Press**

Ramsey Press publishes fiction and nonfiction books, board games and more. This includes best-selling books such as *Business Boutique*, *Smart Money Smart Kids*,

and *Retire Inspired*, along with the *Financial Peace Junior* series and *The Legacy Journey*.

### **Ramsey Event Productions**

Smart Money, Smart Conference, EntreLeadership, Retire Inspired, Business Boutique, and Momentum – dynamic live events where Dave Ramsey, Rachel Cruze, Chris Hogan, Christy Wright, Anthony O'Neal and an impressive roster of thought leaders and world-class speakers bring messages of hope to live audiences around the country.

### **Dave Says**

Dave Says and Dave Ramsey's EntreLeadership are syndicated columns carried by more than 500 publishers, with a total, combined print circulation of more than eight million. Featuring the advice of personal finance expert and best-selling author Dave Ramsey, the Dave Says column is filled with timely, relevant questions and answers taken from actual letters and calls on Ramsey's radio program, *The Dave Ramsey Show*.

### **Ramsey Solutions Company History<sup>5</sup>**

#### **2018**

- The Dave Ramsey Show surpasses 600 radio affiliates.
- Ramsey Solutions has more than 650 team members.

#### **2017**

- Christy Wright authors Business Boutique.
- EveryDollar surpasses two million users.
- The Dave Ramsey Show surpasses 13 million weekly listeners on more than 585 radio stations and a variety of digital platforms.
- Ramsey Solutions has more than 600 team members.
- EveryDollar surpasses two million users.

#### **2016**

- Rachel Cruze authors Love Your Life, Not Theirs.
- Chris Hogan authors Retire Inspired.
- The Dave Ramsey Show surpasses 12 million weekly listeners on more than 575 radio stations and a variety of digital platforms.
- Ramsey Solutions has more than 550 team members.
- EveryDollar surpasses 1 million users.

#### **2015**

- The Dave Ramsey Show expands to more than 550 radio station affiliates, reaching more than 8.5 million listeners weekly.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.daveramsey.com/pr/company-history>.

- EveryDollar, an online budgeting tool and companion app, was launched.
- Ramsey Solutions has more than 500 team members.
- Smart Money Smart Kids class was launched.
- Smart Money Tour live event was launched.
- More than 10 million books sold combined.
- Christy Wright launched her first headlining live event.

## **2014**

- The company rebranded to become Ramsey Solutions as part of an ongoing plan for growth and longevity.
- Dave hosts live events in Boise, Dallas, Indianapolis, Raleigh, Salt Lake City and San Antonio.
- Rachel Cruze and Dave Ramsey release Smart Money, Smart Kids in April and it debuted as a best-seller on New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Publishers Weekly.
- The company has more than 400 team members.
- More than 1,000,000 people have attended live events.
- Dave Ramsey reaches more than 500,000 Twitter followers.

## **2013**

- Since 1994, more than 2 million families have benefited from Financial Peace University.
- Dave Says column is available to more than 18.2 million readers through 410 publications.
- A new live event, Legacy Journey LIVE!, featuring Dave Ramsey and Rachel Cruze, was launched.
- The Legacy Journey, a 7-week follow-up class to Financial Peace University, was launched.
- Dave hosts live events in Cincinnati, Colorado Springs, Des Moines, Austin, Greenville, Birmingham, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Knoxville, Orlando, Spokane, Tulsa, Los Angeles, and New York City.
- Rachel Cruze and Chris Hogan both launched their first headline live events.
- The Dave Ramsey Show launches a 24-hour, online streaming video channel.
- The Total Money Makeover: Classic Edition is released to celebrate 10 years in print.
- More than 950,000 people have attended live events.
- Foundations in Personal Finance, is available in more than 16,000 high schools and educational institutions, with more than 1.3 million students in all 50 states.
- More than 331,000 Dave Ramsey Show listeners were referred to Dave's Endorsed Local Providers.
- Lampo Press releases the New York Times and Wall Street Journal best-selling book START. by Jon Acuff.

## **2012**

- Since 1994, more than 1.8 million families have benefited from Financial Peace University.

- Dave Says column is available to more than 17.8 million readers.
- Foundations in Personal Finance, is available in more than 11,000 high schools and educational institutions, with more than 1 million students in all 50 states.
- A new live event, Living a Legacy, featuring Dave Ramsey, Rachel Cruze and Jon Acuff, was launched.
- Dave hosts live events in Long Beach, Orlando, Denver, Indianapolis, Oklahoma City, Franklin, Mesa, Fresno, Houston, Highlands Ranch, Seattle, Grand Rapids, Atlanta, and San Antonio.
- More than 280,000 Dave Ramsey Show listeners were referred to Dave's Endorsed Local Providers.
- The Lampo Group has grown to more than 350 team members.
- A newly revised, 9-week Financial Peace University was released in July.
- The Dave Ramsey Show celebrated 20 years in radio.
- The Dave Ramsey Channel was launched on iHeart Radio.
- The Dave Ramsey Show adds WOR, in New York, to its line-up.
- Andrews Gutierrez launched his first live event.
- Rachel Cruze launched a newly revised version of Generation Change.
- Dave Ramsey's Custom College Guide was released.
- A special edition Junior Adventures book, The Best Christmas Ever, was released.

## **2011**

- Since 1994, more than 1.5 million families have benefited from Financial Peace University.
- Dave Says column is available to more than 17.5 million readers.
- Foundations in Personal Finance is available in more than 10,000 high schools and educational institutions, with more than 350,000 students, in all 50 states.
- Dave hosts live events in Nashville, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Colorado Springs, Portland, Los Angeles, Dallas and Houston.
- More than 294,000 Dave Ramsey Show listeners were referred to Dave's Endorsed Local Providers.
- The Lampo Group has grown to more than 320 team members!
- Rachel Cruze wrote The Graduate's Survival Kit, released in May, for graduating high school seniors.
- Jon Acuff wrote Quitter, his Wall Street Journal best-selling book, in May.
- Dave's book, EntreLeadership, was released in September. The book debuted at number one on the New York Times best-sellers list.
- The Andres Gutierrez Show premiered in October.
- The Dave Ramsey Show added its 500th station.

## **2010**

- Since 1994, more than 1,250,000 families have benefited from this life-changing program of Financial Peace University.
- Dave Says column is available to more than 16 million readers.
- Foundations in Personal Finance is available in more than 10,000 high schools and educational institutions in all 50 states.

- Dave does live events in Houston, TX, Grand Rapids, MI, San Antonio, TX, Dallas, TX, Charleston, SC, Phoenix, AZ, Atlanta, GA, Raleigh, NC and Orlando, FL with more than 65,000 total attendees for the year.
- Dave does Entreleadership One-day Simulcast and events with over 18,000 attendees for the year.
- 285,000 Dave Ramsey Show listeners were referred to Dave's Endorsed Local Providers.
- The Lampo Group has grown to more than 300 team members!
- Andres Gutierrez joined Dave to bring a message of hope to the Hispanic Community. Paz Financiera is offered in churches, businesses and community centers.
- Dave announces co-publishing agreement with Simon and Schuster's Howard Books. First book, based on his Entreleadership principles, will be released in the fall, 2011.

### **2009**

- Since 1994, more than 1,000,000 families have benefited from this life-changing program of Financial Peace University.
- 1,000,000 people participated in Town Hall for Hope.
- The Dave Ramsey Show is heard on more than 450 stations, including 72 top-100 markets and 10 top-20 markets.
- Dave Ramsey was named Network/Syndicated Personality of the Year at the 2009 National Association of Broadcasters' Marconi Radio Awards.
- Dave Says column is available to more than 14 million readers.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in more than 10,000 high schools and educational institutions in all 50 states.
- Dave does live events in Portland, OR; Indianapolis, IN; Atlanta, GA; Grand Rapids, MI; Houston, TX; Dallas, TX; San Antonio, TX; Kansas City, MO; Colorado Springs, CO; Detroit, MI; and Salt Lake City, UT —more than 82,000 total attendees for the year.
- 250,000 Dave Ramsey Show listeners were referred to Dave's Endorsed Local Providers.
- The Lampo Group was named one of Nashville Business Journal's "Best Places to Work" for the fourth straight year.
- The Lampo Group has grown to more than 280 team members.

### **2008**

- Financial Peace University partners with Military Saves to help servicemen and women learn how to handle their money.
- The Dave Ramsey Show adds its 350th affiliate.
- Dave Says column is available to more than five million readers.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in more than 2,000 high schools in all 50 states.

### **2007**

- More than 165,000 families join FPU. Since 1994, more than 500,000 families have benefited from this life-changing program.
- The Dave Ramsey Show is heard on more than 345 stations, including 72 top-100 markets and 10 top-20 markets.
- Dave does live events in Oklahoma City, OK; Portland, OR; Birmingham, AL; Greenville, SC; Indianapolis, IN; Atlanta, GA; Grand Rapids, MI; Houston, TX; Dallas, TX; San Antonio, TX; Cincinnati, OH; Jackson, MS; Kansas City, MO; and Louisville, KY—more than 80,000 total attendees for the year.
- A revised edition of The Total Money Makeover is released including all new success stories.
- Dave Says column is seen by more than 4.5 million readers.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in 1,800 high schools in 46 states.
- The Lampo Group grows to more than 196 team members.
- "The Dave Ramsey Show" premieres on the Fox Business Network.

## **2006**

- A total of 120,000 families graduate from FPU this year! More than 380,000 families have completed the life-changing class since 1994.
- Dave begins a development deal with CBS Entertainment to produce a reality show pilot.
- The Dave Ramsey Show is heard on more than 295 stations, including 65 top-100 markets and eight top-20 markets.
- Dave does live events in Oklahoma City, OK; Dallas, TX; Knoxville, TN; San Antonio, Texas; Cleveland, Ohio; Birmingham, Ala.; Louisville, Ky.; Nashville, TN; Greenville, SC; Evansville, IN; Houston, TX; and Atlanta, GA—41,669 total attendees for the year.
- Dave Says column is seen by more than 3 million readers.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in more than 1,000 schools.
- WealthCoach begins helping music artists, authors and athletes manage their money.
- The Lampo Group has 173 employees.

## **2005**

- A total of 90,000 families graduate from FPU this year! More than 260,000 families have completed the life-changing class since 1994.
- Dave helps families with their money questions on The Oprah Winfrey Show.
- The Dave Ramsey Show is heard on more than 250 stations including 56 top-100 markets and 12 top-20 markets.
- Dave does live events in Houston, TX; New York, NY; Grand Rapids, MI; Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; Memphis, TN; Birmingham, AL; Jackson, MS; Knoxville, TN; Louisville, KY; San Antonio, TX; Oklahoma, OK; and Evansville, TN—51,097 total attendees for the year.
- The Money Answer Book is published by J. Countryman, a division of Thomas Nelson Publishing.

- Chick-fil-A features Dave's children's books in their kid's meals and Lampo Press releases two additional children's books.
- Dave Says column is seen by more than two million readers.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in 600 schools.
- Dave began teaching business leaders Entleadership.
- The Lampo Group has 110 employees.

#### **2004**

- Six FPU lessons are translated into Spanish, and more than 150 families go through the Spanish version of the program.
- Financial Peace at Work coordinates with a major manufacturer to sign up more than 2,500 of the manufacturer's team members.
- More than 60,000 families attend Financial Peace University at thousands of locations across the country including community centers, small businesses, churches, military installations, and banks.
- Daily Money Makeover: 90 vignettes become available to radio stations.
- Dave is profiled by Lesley Stahl on 60 Minutes.
- The Dave Ramsey Show gets its 200th affiliate. The show is heard on 220 stations including 47 top-100 markets and nine top-20 markets.
- Dave does live events in Atlanta, GA; Nashville, TN; Grand Rapids, MI; Greenville, SC; Winston-Salem, NC; Memphis, TN; Pittsburgh, PA; Spokane, WA; Houston, TX; Louisville, KY; Midland/Odessa, TX; Jackson, MS; Huntsville, AL; Oklahoma City, OK; Owensboro, KY; and Montgomery, AL—41,280 total attendees for the year.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in more than 400 schools nationwide with more than 11,000 students taking the classes.
- The Lampo Group has 105 employees!

#### **2003**

- Viking releases Financial Peace Revisited in January.
- More than 110,000 families have attended Financial Peace University since its creation.
- The Total Money Makeover debuts on the best-seller lists, and becomes our third New York Times Best-Seller. Dave begins a 32-city The Total Money Makeover tour that includes 11 LIVE events, 31 book signings, 28 sermons and 108 media appearances. Dave simulcasts The Total Money Makeover LIVE event to more than 500 locations across the country.
- "The Dave Ramsey Show" is available on more than 137 stations including 45 top 100 markets and ten top 20 markets.
- Dave does LIVE events in Oklahoma City, Okla.; Jackson, Miss.; Nashville, Tenn.; Houston, Texas; Midland/Odessa, Texas; San Antonio, Texas; Monroe, La.; Louisville, Ky.; Jackson, Tenn.; Memphis, Tenn.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Washington, D.C.; Portland, Maine; Phoenix, Ariz.; Greenville, S.C.; Denver, Colo.; Pittsburg, Pa.; and Grand Rapids, Mich. – 44,930 total attendees for the year.
- Dave's Club becomes MyTotalMoneyMakeover.com.



- The Lampo Group releases the children's book series: The Super Red Racer, My Fantastic Fieldtrip, The Big Birthday Surprise, and Careless at the Carnival. The company also releases *Tranquilidad Financiera*, a Spanish translation of Financial Peace.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in 300 schools.
- The Lampo Group grows to 100 team members.

## **2002**

- More than 30,000 families graduated from FPU this year (70,000 since 1994).
- "The Dave Ramsey Show" is heard on 137 stations including 35 top 100 markets and eight top 20 markets.
- Dave holds his first Financial Peace LIVE simulcast event. He also does LIVE events in Jacksonville, Fla.; Jackson, Miss.; Nashville, Tenn.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; San Antonio, Texas; Houston, Texas; Midland/Odessa, Texas; Monroe, La.; Pittsburg, Pa.; Portland, Maine; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Spartanburg, S.C.; Huntsville, Ala.; Phoenix, Ariz.; and Owensboro, Ky.— 32,355 total attendees for the year.
- Priceless is published by J. Countryman, a division of Thomas Nelson, and lands on Gift Book best-seller List.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in 100 schools.
- The Lampo Group grows to 70 team members.

## **2001**

- FPU begins working with the military. Fort Knox in Ky. is the first base to hold an FPU class.
- More than 20,000 families attend FPU this year (40,000 since 1994).
- Updated FPU video classes are recorded over six days with an audience of more than 650 families. FPU creates the Workplace and Financial Literacy programs.
- "The Dave Ramsey Show" is heard on more than 96 stations including 25 top 100 markets and four top 20 markets.
- Dave does LIVE events in Jacksonville, Fla.; Paducah, Ky.; Jackson, Miss.; Nashville, Tenn.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Houston, Texas; Jackson, Tenn.; Louisville, Ky.; Charleston, S.C.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Huntsville, Ala.; and Phoenix, Ariz.— 32,700 total attendees for the year.
- The subscription Web site, "Dave's Club" begins online.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation is available in 35 schools.
- The Lampo Group grows to 46 team members.

## **2000**

- FPU begins working with churches. The Lampo Group creates a church department late in the fall of 2000.
- More than 10,000 families attend FPU this year (20,000 since 1994).
- A new radio studio is built in the company offices. The Lampo Group begins aggressively syndicating "The Dave Ramsey Show." The show is available on 56 stations including 14 top 100 markets and two top 20 markets.

- Dave does LIVE events in Jackson, Miss.; Kansas City, Mo.; Birmingham, Ala.; Nashville, Tenn.; Jackson, Tenn.; Paducah, Ky.; Louisville, Ky.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Memphis, Tenn.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; and Phoenix, Ariz. – 25,300 total attendees for the year.
- Financial Peace Jr. is created and How To Have More Than Enough becomes available.
- Financial Peace for the Next Generation becomes available and is offered at 12 schools to 527 students.
- The Lampo Group grows to 33 team members.

### **1999**

- Financial Peace Personal Finance Software is released and wins the Ziff-Davis Financial Software of the Year Award.
- Between 1997 and 1999 more than 10,000 families enroll in FPU (10,000 graduates since 1994).
- "The Money Game" becomes "The Dave Ramsey Show." The show is available on 33 radio stations including eight top 100 markets.
- Dave does LIVE events in Louisville, Ky.; Birmingham, Ala.; Jackson, Miss.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Memphis, Tenn.; Nashville, Tenn.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Oklahoma City, Okla.; and Paducah, Ky. – 20,250 total attendees for the year.
- Penguin Books publishes More Than Enough, and with a 10 city tour the book becomes our second New York Times Best-Seller.

### **1998**

- Financial Peace Planner is released, and becomes a national best-seller according to Business Week and USA Today.
- "The Money Game" is voted the number one radio show in Nashville by The Nashville Scene The studio moves into The Lampo Group offices and broadcasts to 21 markets.
- Dave does LIVE events in Louisville, Ky.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Charleston, S.C.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Jackson, Miss.; Memphis, Tenn.; Bristol, Tenn.; Nashville, Tenn.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; and Spartanburg, S.C. – 20,200 total attendees.
- The company releases three new products: 1997 Taxpayer Relief Act video, The Envelope System and Dumping Debt software.

### **1997**

- Viking publishes Financial Peace and puts together a 21 city book tour. Financial Peace becomes The Lampo Group's first New York Times Best-Seller.
- Penguin Audiobooks releases the audio version of Financial Peace.
- FPU videos become available and classes are held in bookstores, churches, libraries, restaurants, businesses, radio stations, and schools in 32 states.
- People magazine features Dave in a three page article. He is interviewed by Matt Lauer on "The Today Show" (It is Matt's first day and Dave is his first interview). Dave also does his first appearance on Pat Robertson's CBN. Later this year Dave has appearances on "Sally Jesse Raphael," CNN, and "CBS This Morning."

- "The Money Game" is broadcast in 12 cities.
- Dave does his first radio affiliate LIVE event tour including Spokane, Wash.; Las Vegas, Nev. and Memphis, Tenn.—4,950 total attendees for the year. The Lampo Group Inc. conducts 26 LIVE events, 12 of which are large radio affiliate events.

### **1996**

- The first FPU video shoot is done over 2 Saturdays. The total number of families that graduated from FPU since 1994 reaches 1,000.
- Dave decides to take his Nashville radio show, "The Money Game," nationwide. The first affiliate station to pick up "The Money Game" is in Oak Ridge, Tenn.
- The Lampo Group conducts 34 seminars.
- The Web site FinancialPeace.com is launched.

### **1995**

- Dave self-publishes a revised version of Financial Peace.
- FPU grows to five days a week.
- The Lampo Group conducts 22 seminars.

### **1994**

- Financial Peace University (FPU) begins. On a weekly basis for six months, Dave and his overhead projector teach five families FPU.

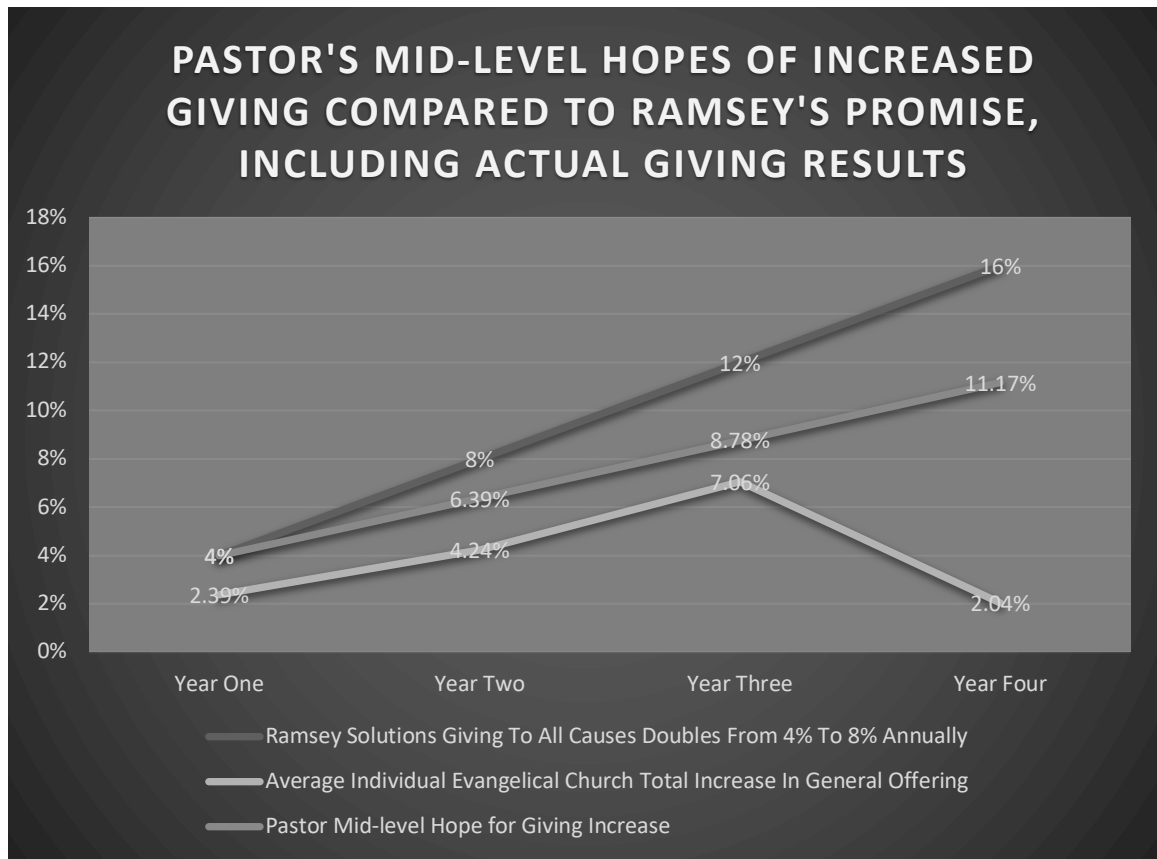
### **1992**

- Dave self-publishes Financial Peace and begins selling it by mail and out of the trunk of his car.
- After Dave is a guest on a WWTN 99.7 FM program, the station asks Dave to start a local radio show answering financial questions from callers. The station is in bankruptcy and can't pay for talent.
- Dave's show is called "The Money Game."

### **1991**

- The Lampo Group Inc. begins with Dave counseling financially hurting people one on one.

APPENDIX D:  
ADDITIONAL FIGURES INCLUDED AFTER ORAL DEFENSE



*Figure 2 – A Further Comparison in Results of Giving*

Notes: After completing the oral defense of this dissertation, these figures were included to illustrate the “mid-level” expectations of what our Pastors in the Evangelical Church hoped for in giving increases. Obviously not as high as Ramsey’s promise of doubling of giving, but at the same time, higher than our actual data represented.

The “mid-level” line above is represented by starting at Ramsey’s original number of giving (4%), while inserting actual Evangelical Church giving percentages.

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