



### Transcript

#### Part 6 - "Entitled"

*Andy Stanley*

Well, it's good to see all of y'all today. If you've been coming, we're wrapping up this series, *Recovery Road*. And if you haven't been here, you're coming in on the tail end of a movie, and you can actually go online to our North Point website and catch all these messages, if you want. We encourage you to do that and share them with a friend. On your way out today, as I promised you if you follow me on Twitter, we're going to give everybody a prize. It's a window sticker, and it says, *Recovery begins with me*. This is for your car. And if you're like me, you don't like to stick things on your car. I'm giving you permission to make an exception. This can be your exception.

So if you're watching online, your online host is going to explain how you can get one of these, as well, and actually some other things that relate to being online, so you won't be left out. We don't want anybody to be left out. This is your prize today for coming to church. And even if you've never been here before, we're going to give you a free prize, and you have to love a church that gives you a free prize. And when we give away free prizes, we give away a lot of free prizes. So anyway, we're wrapping this up, and bottom line is we just think that when things happen that get our whole country's attention and those things intersect with what the Scripture teaches, we should talk about it.

And even though today is the end of the series, it is not the end of the movement—we have some things that we're going to roll out the rest of this fall and even the first of next year to keep us focused on this. Because we believe that if the church of the Lord Jesus Christ would just do some foundational things, some fundamental things that Jesus specifically taught, that we could be part of lifting our entire nation out of this recovery. And we believe that it could be done in such a way that God would actually get the glory. As we said a couple of messages ago, our nation has a strange reluctance to give God credit for anything. We think that can change, because things are pretty desperate. And it won't take anything extreme from us, again, if we will simply follow Jesus in some very simple things that we have been asked to follow him in anyway. We think it could make a huge, huge difference.

So as we begin this last message in this series, let me begin by this, a little bit of a story. Now, as Jesus was coming to the end of his ministry, he was on his way to Jerusalem one afternoon. He was followed by his twelve apostles and possibly some other people. Jesus knew that this would be the last time he would go to Jerusalem because once he was there he would never leave. He knew he was going to be arrested and eventually crucified. And so he decides to kind of get his guys up to speed with what's going on, because up until this point they've been very popular when they enter the city—crowds are there and people want to be close to Jesus. And if you couldn't get close to Jesus, the next best thing was to be close to somebody who was close to Jesus.

So all the disciples, they were a little bit like rock stars at this particular juncture in their ministry.



They were very, very popular. So as they are moving toward Jerusalem, Jesus knows he needs to kind of give them a dose of reality. As they're walking together he begins to tell them what to expect and he says this: he says, *When we go into Jerusalem I'm going to be arrested. I'm going to be spit upon, I'm going to be mocked, I'm going to be tried, and eventually I'm going to be put to death.* And he says this in very graphic terms. He kind of gives them this list of what to expect and they're not listening.

And apparently he says it again and they're still just not paying any attention. Finally, James and John walk up to Jesus and they kind of push in beside him so the others can't hear and they say, *Hey Jesus, listen, sorry about that being spit on and mocked and crucified and all that stuff. But hey, hey, hey, when you become the king . . .* And they kind of launch into this other conversation. They haven't even listened. *Sorry about you're going to be beat and everything, that's tough, but hey, when you become the king, when you're finally on your throne, we want to know—could we sit on your left and your right? We'd like to know if we could be in positions of power.* I mean it's the most insensitive thing you've ever seen in the whole New Testament. Well, the other apostles see that James and John are kind of having this private conversation with Jesus and so they get indignant. They realize that James and John are asking for special entitlement, special position, and they're like, *Hey, wait a minute. We've been with you just as long as these two guys; that's not fair.* And they break out into this argument over who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God, right after Jesus has just finished telling them, *Hey, I'm going to be arrested, beat, spit upon, mocked, and put to death.* It's unbelievable.

So Jesus says, *Okay, time out.* And he puts the whole group in time out. Time out, he sits them down under a tree before they get to Jerusalem and he says, *Okay, we've talked about this before, but let me go over it one more time.* And he says this, he says, *Look, you know how the rulers of the Gentiles and the leaders of the Gentiles, when they get power, you know how they lord it over the people they have power over. You know how they cause the people that are under them to serve them to do whatever they want them to do. And they lord it over them and rule over them—you know how that happens.*

And they're sitting there going, *Yeah, that's why we want to be in power, because we want to do that. We want to have that kind of power. We want people to go left if we say left and go right if we say go right. We want to have that kind of power. Jesus, I don't know if you're paying attention. That's why we hang out with you, because see we think one day you're going to be a ruling king and we're your guys.* And John is going, *Yeah. And I wanted to be like the number two guy or the number three guy.* Then they got in a big argument again. Jesus says, *Wait, wait, wait, wait. Listen, you know how it is with the Gentile rulers, the pagan rulers, how they lord it over everybody when they get into a position of empowerment and they're entitled to all that attention and position?* And the disciples are, *Yeah.*

He says, *Well, not so with you. It's fine to want to be great.* He says that. *It's okay to want to be in charge, it's okay to be a ruler; it's okay to have authority. But guys, if the day comes that you actually have authority, that you actually have position, that you actually have the opportunity to rule over other people—you know how the Gentiles do it, you know how the typical ruler and leader does it—not so with you. I hope one day*



*you acquire that kind of power, but when you have it, don't you use it like everybody else you've seen uses it.*

Now, it's been said that the term that describes this generation better than any other generation, especially the eighteen to thirty years old, several people have pointed this out, the term that best summarizes or describes this generation eighteen to thirty year olds is the term "entitled." In fact, if you're a parent of a teenager, you're thinking, *That's what it is. You know I've had a hard time, but that's what it is. They feel entitled. They feel like I owe them the next thing, the next iteration, the newest, the shiniest. They don't seem to care how much money I make. They just feel entitled, and if everybody else has one they need to have one.* But I don't think it's just the eighteen to thirty year olds. I think our whole nation, and I think everybody at every age, the word that describes us best is the word entitled.

Now, when I say entitled I could give you a definition, but that wouldn't be helpful, so let me describe what I mean by entitled. Entitled is like an Easter egg hunt. Do you remember Easter egg hunts with your kids? And there are little kids and medium size kids and there are big kids. And if you're the parent of a little kid and you see those big kids, you're nervous. And somebody drops a ribbon or fires off a gun (hopefully not) or cuts something and they say go, and a thousand, or you know, several hundred kids run out into the field to collect Easter eggs.

Remember how all the big kids would knock down the little kids and get the eggs first and they're getting their pillowcase full of eggs. And the big kids are getting there first and they're grabbing right before the little kids. And the little kids are toddling around crying. And they're about to get an egg, they see an egg, and boom it's gone—some medium size kid gets it and goes. And at the end of the Easter egg hunt, the big kids are walking around with twelve pounds of Easter eggs and they're so happy because they have so many Easter eggs. *These are my Easter eggs; I'm entitled to these Easter eggs because I got them first. Okay?* And then you've got the parents of the little kids and they're in tears, going to the people that put the Easter egg hunt together, complaining, *My kids are entitled to Easter eggs. They're little; we paid; we waited in line; we go to this church, you know, and all this stuff. It's not fair that they got more Easter eggs.* They're feeling entitled, because they worked for those Easter eggs. You're feeling entitled for your kids, because after all, everybody should get the amount of Easter eggs, and you have entitlement wars. That's entitlement.

Okay, maybe you can't relate to that. How about right after Thanksgiving sale, okay? You have six hundred women with their faces pressed up against the glass of a department store and there are twenty-two blouses and there are six hundred women. They open the doors and people are trampled and they have to call 9-1-1. And they get in there and the twenty-five women that get the twenty-five blouses on sale, they are so excited. And they're yelling and screaming and running around and they're racing to the checkout register. *This is my blouse; I'm entitled. I got here at 4:30 in the morning. I beat you to it; it is mine.* Then the rest of the women are lining up at the register saying, *That's not fair, we got here early, I went to get my friend's coffee and when I came back you had opened the door and that's not fair. And I'm entitled to the same discount.* And all of a sudden its entitlement wars, right?



Or guys, it's you trying to get the plasma television at Walmart for \$395.00. And they're going to have two hundred and there are six hundred guys, and you're beating each other up. But if you get one it's yours; you worked for it. If you didn't get one it's not fair, and you're entitled to one as well. And nobody can sort all that out, right?

Now, if you're a Christian or a church person, if you can imagine Jesus walking into Walmart as the men fight it out over the flat screens or into the department stores as women fight it out for the blouses, or even weirder than that—Jesus showing up at an Easter egg hunt. He's going, *Seriously? I rise from the dead, you have an Easter egg hunt, and you are arguing and fighting and crying over Easter eggs. What's going on?* But anyway, if you can imagine . . . and if you could imagine Jesus trying to sort all that out. Like would he take the blouse and do a Solomon thing and say, *We're just going to cut it in half and give you one-half.* You know how would he sort all that out? How would Jesus determine who should get the television? Is it first come, first serve? Is it by age? Is it by income? Who should get the most Easter eggs? Do you measure them all out; do you weigh them; do people stand in line; is it like who's been naughty or nice; is it like a Santa Claus thing? I mean if you put Jesus into one of those "who's entitled to" scenarios, what would he do?

And the New Testament tells us—the New Testament models this for us. And I'm telling you, if you're a Christian, what we're about to talk about is huge. If you're not a Christian you get to pick and choose what parts of this message you like, but if you are a Christian, Jesus could not be any more clear. He would walk into all the environments where, if you're trying to figure out how much tax should you pay, or what's the new question, how much of your money do you deserve to keep, which means how much of your money are you entitled to keep and how much is the government entitled to—he would walk into all of those questions and we would look at Jesus like, *Okay Jesus, you're smart; you tell us how to sort all this out.*

And here's what Jesus would say. He would say, *The question isn't "What are you entitled to?" The better question is what will you do with what you're entitled to?* To which we say, *Okay, but that doesn't help me. I want you to work this out, I want you to be the judge, I want you to be the arbitrator, I want you to tell us what fair, I want you to tell me how many I should get.* And Jesus would say, *I'll tell you what, you work all that out. Have an election, vote, do a survey—I don't care. Just get it all worked out, and once everybody has what they think they're entitled to, then invite me into the discussion.* And once everybody thinks that we've kind of worked out who's entitled to what, then I'm going to come to the discussion. But I'm simply going to ask you one really simple question: *Now that you know what you're entitled to, what are you going to do with what you're entitled to?*

Now Christians, if we could get this right, it would change the country. If just the Christians, if we could get this right, listen to me, it would change the reputation of the church in this nation. If we could get this right, it would bring the church out of the margins of society and put it front and center once again. And if we could get this right, this wouldn't be extraordinary, this is just basic Christian teaching, and it's what Jesus, once again, modeled. Because everybody wants to know are you on the left side or the right side? And he always says, *I'm on my own side. I didn't come to take sides; I've come to take over. You are both wrong;*



*you're all wrong. I don't care what you think you're entitled to. The question is what are you going to do with what you're so sure you're entitled to? And if you answer that question correctly, the world changes. It's why in the first century, Christians, who had nothing, within three hundred years, toppled the Roman empire—not with an army, but through their generosity, through their understanding of the principle we're about to discuss.*

Jesus modeled this in the most extreme way. It was hours before he would be arrested. The guys get to Jerusalem, he's kind of gotten them all settled down and they're going to celebrate their last Passover together. If you remember, Passover is the Jewish feast, or celebration where they remembered the night that the death angel, the Angel of Death came through Egypt and struck down the first born of every family that didn't have the blood of the lamb over the doorpost. And it was an eerie, scary night. It's not a story you want to tell your children right before they go to sleep. *Hey, let's read the Bible; we're going to skip over that one.* It's a very eerie story. In the first century the Jews believed that this was actually a historical event, that God actually struck down the first born of every family, Jewish or Egyptian, who didn't have the blood of the lamb over the doorpost. So year after year after year they would celebrate the remembrance of this historical event called Passover, the night that the Angel of Death passed over.

This particular evening, Jesus is about to move into the Passover season, or weekend, or celebration, so he's having this traditional Passover meal with his disciples. And in this meal, in this time together something extraordinary happens. Unfortunately for you and for me I can't even exaggerate the emotion that would have been in the room the night that this happened, but let me tell you the story and we'll see if we can capture some of it together.

*John 13:1 (TNIV)*

*<sup>1</sup> It was just before the Passover Festival. [So it's the night before the official Passover time.] Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. [So he knows the end is near.] Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

And this is kind of the setup for this next section of Jesus' life and for his story. And then here's where the story gets rich.

*John 13:2 (TNIV)*

*<sup>2</sup> The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus.*

So you know the story of Judas betraying Jesus. That's already in motion, all of that is beginning to happen, and then John tells us this.



*John 13:3 (TNIV)*

*<sup>3</sup> Jesus knew . . .*

Now, this is an interesting little phrase in the New Testament. It's as if John is telling us that in some new way it dawned on Jesus, that he had some sort of epiphany, or possibly something he already knew came to the surface, or somehow he became more aware than he had already been aware. I don't think he learned something new in this moment, but it's as if John is saying there was something that happened during this meal as Jesus looked around the room and saw the disciples. It dawned on him, it hung over him in an indisputable way that the Father had put all things, all things, that God had put all things under his power, or under his authority, your translation may read, and that he had come from God and was returning to God. Now this is amazing. In this moment it's somehow, as Jesus is talking—everybody's kind of talking and chatting on what are we going to do tomorrow, and, you know, who cooked the food—and Jesus looks around the room and he's overwhelmed with this sense that God, his Father, get this, has put everything, has put everything under his authority.

He's not only the most powerful person in the room; he's the most powerful person in the city. He's not only the most powerful person in the city, he is the most powerful person in the nation; he's the most powerful person in the world. He's all of a sudden aware that he's got the power. So what do you do? So what do you do when it dawns on you that God has given you all this power and right down the street is the group of people that are plotting your execution? What do you do when it dawns on you that you're the most powerful person in the room, in the city, in the country, on the planet and you know that the man who has betrayed you is about to slip out the back door or possibly by this time is already moving down the street to sell you out for thirty pieces of silver? What's your next move? What is your next move when you realize you have been entitled by God with all the power that exists in the world? And this may be the most important little word in the whole New Testament: so. Because this little word "so" is the hinge, it's the hinge between this dawning, this moment in which Jesus realizes in a way that maybe he's never realized before. And what he does next—look at what he does next.

*John 13:4 (TNIV)*

*<sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing,*

He was a Rabbi; he wore a robe that is a symbol of that kind of authority. When he came into a city, people knew that he was a Rabbi by what he wore. Jesus stands up from the meal, all eyes go to him, and he takes off his outer robe. Then what he did next I'm sure there was not a word spoken.

*John 13:4 (TNIV)*

*<sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist.*



And at that moment there were many different emotions in the room, because they realized what he was about to do. He had gone from Rabbi to servant simply by taking off that robe and tying a towel around his waist. Some of the men in the room thought, *Oh, I should have done this*. Some of the people in the room thought, *Oh, I should have planned this*. Some of the people in the room thought, *Oh, we should have hired someone to do this*. At least one man in the room thought, *There is no way I'm going to let him do what it looks like he's about to do*. Do you know what your Savior did the moment he was most aware that he had been entitled by God to all power and all authority? He took the form of a servant. Check this out.

*John 13:5-6 (TNIV)*

*<sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. <sup>6</sup> He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"*

In other words, *Seriously, seriously, you're going to wash my feet, Jesus? Pause for just a minute. Those hands that you're about to use to touch my dirty feet—I saw you take those hands, pick up mud, spit in those hands, make mud pie and put them on someone's eyes and he could see. And I'm going to let you take those hands and wash my feet? I've seen you take those hands and lay them on sick people and they became well immediately. I saw you take those hands and lay them on a friend of ours and we thought she was dead and she got up and she cooked a meal for us. Are you kidding? I'm going to let you take those hands and wash my feet? I don't think so.*

*John 13:7 (TNIV)*

*<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

In other words, *Men, you think I'm simply doing what you didn't hire someone else to do. You think I'm simply doing what I think you should do. You think I'm simply doing something that's customary. What I'm doing is way, way bigger than that.*

*John 3:12 (TNIV)*

*<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, [and this is so powerful] he put on his clothes and returned to his place.*

So in this moment there's this visual of Jesus the Rabbi, Jesus the teacher, taking off his authority as a Rabbi, taking on the garb of a servant, then taking off the garb of a servant, putting back on the mantle and the robe of authority as a Rabbi. And there, I'm telling you, it is silent in the room. Nobody is eating. Nobody is saying a word. And then he asked this question.



*John 3:12 (TNIV)*

<sup>12</sup> *“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them.*

To which no one answers that question out loud, because they know they would answer wrong. *No, because you just told us that we don't really understand what's going on. And Jesus, we've been around you long enough to know that we rarely do.*

*John 3:12-13 (TNIV)*

<sup>12</sup> *“Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. [This is so huge.]* <sup>13</sup> *“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’*

*I'm entitled to those positions. You call me teacher, that's what you should call me. You call me Lord and I've never said, Oh no, no, no. I'm not the Lord. He says, You should call me Lord. I am Teacher and I am Lord, and that is what you should call me. Those are the titles and that's the level of respect I am entitled to.*

*John 3:13 (TNIV)*

<sup>13</sup> *and rightly so, for that is what I am.* <sup>14</sup> *Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, [He doesn't dispute that authority or those titles.] have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.* <sup>15</sup> *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

I have set for you an example, and at any moment, at any place, at any time when it dawns on you that you're entitled, I have set for you an example. If you ever wonder what should I do with this entitlement of time, this entitlement of money, this entitlement of influence, this entitlement of power, this entitlement of possession, if you ever wonder, *Now that I'm entitled, what should I do . . .*

*John 3:15 (TNIV)*

<sup>15</sup> *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

Christians, Christians, these are our marching orders. You do not have to be a Bible scholar to understand this. He could not have made it clearer for the men in the room or for us today. The question is not: what are you entitled to? It's: what will we do with what we have been entitled to? Jesus says, *I've set for you an example. I went beyond teaching. I've set for you an example. You look for a way to leverage what you're entitled to for the sake of those who are less entitled.*

My friends, that should be the reputation of the church in our community and in the world. When people think church, they should think, *I don't believe what they believe, but I'm glad they're in this community.*





*Don't buy into all the Jesus stuff, but I hope my daughter marries one; I hope my son marries one. I like to hire them and I want to work for one. I don't necessarily embrace all that theology, but I'm telling you what, the more you give those people the more they invest back into the people around them. There's nothing better than a rich Christian. Now, he goes on.*

*John 3:16 (TNIV)*

*<sup>16</sup> Very truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, [Although we act like it, don't we?] nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you [not believe them, not study them, not preach them, not exegete them, not declare it from the mountaintops, not build a theology around it, you'll be blessed, the world will be blessed if you] do them.*

If you ask the question, what should I do with what I am entitled to, he says, you will be blessed. The world will be blessed. The world would be changed. So recovery begins, recovery begins when we leverage our entitlements for the benefit of those less entitled. Imagine how that would change the discussion in our nation right now. If the more entitled you were, the more apt you were to do something for those were less entitled. Now here's the cool thing, and here's the thing I love about our churches. And if you're watching online, you need to be part one of our churches if you're not already, because I'm telling you about the people in this church. It is unbelievable.

The people in our churches, you guys get this. Okay? There is basically, there are more than four, but there are essentially four areas where we have all been entitled. You're entitled to your time—this is my time, this is my weekend, it's my spare time, it's my morning to sleep in. You've got time you're entitled to, money, because you've earned it, you deserved it, and even if you inherited it, it was your parents, you know, your parents had every right in the world to leave it to you. So you're entitled to your money, your possessions. You bought it; you saved for it, some of you borrowed for it, but whatever. You've got possessions.

And then some of you have influence. A bunch of you have influence. In fact, if you're a parent you have influence. I love our churches, because so many of you understand how to leverage this stuff for people beyond yourselves. That's why we have so many incredible volunteers. It's why in the middle of the recession we didn't have to lay anybody off. In fact, lots of my friends with big churches had to lay off people, non-profits had to lay off people, and we got down and tight and dirty with how we managed the money here. But even beyond that, you were so generous through all of that we didn't have to lay people off. You're great about your possessions and sharing. And more and more of you are learning how to leverage your influence.

A bunch of you have leveraged your influence at work that allows us to do life lessons over lunch. It's a program where you do Bible studies in your workplace and you've leveraged that influence. People who are officers in big box retailers that we've been able to call and say we need your parking lot for an event or for one of our churches, and you've leveraged your influence in your corporate office to let us use parking. I mean



you get this. I mean it's absolutely incredible, and more and more of you are asking the questions. In fact, it's a fun conversation. How can I use my time, my money, my possessions and my influence? How can I leverage those things I'm entitled to for the sake of people who are less entitled? And as things get worse and worse and worse in our country economically, the more you do this, the brighter your personal light is going to shine in your communities and in your neighborhoods and in the workplace.

But here's where I think we have an even greater and more extraordinary opportunity. This year, and I'm not looking for applause, so if you want to clap you can save it for the end, or if you're at home you can clap anytime, actually. But if you're here, here's the thing—this year once again, once again we were recognized as the second largest church in the country. Several years of this has happened, Joel Osteen is number one and he'll always be number one. Go Joel, okay, Lakewood, I love Joel. So we're number two, but what that means, what that means is that churches all over the country look to us for leadership. They look to us for resources, they copy us, we give them stuff, they call us, how do you do this, how do you do that.

We have, as a church together, we have a lot of this, we have a lot of this, a lot of influence. So we're always asking the question, how do we leverage that influence? And here's where we have the opportunity of a lifetime, the opportunity of a generation. I want us collectively, as a group of churches—with the start of Gwinnett Church, we'll have five big churches in the Atlanta area, plus Southside down by the airport, plus Athens church not too far from us, seven big congregations in the Metro Atlanta area—if we can get this right, we will be a guide and a light to other local churches all over the country.

And if we can get this right at this particular time in the life and the history of our country, God may use the church in an extraordinary way, obviously to give glory to him, as we come out of the margins and as we simply do what Jesus modeled for us to do. So I'm going to push you really hard till the end of the year and at the beginning of next year to be even more aggressive in collectively leveraging the entitlement of your time—it is your time, you can do whatever you want to with it, entitlement of your money, it's your money you can do whatever you want to with it. We know it all comes from God but you're managing it, your possessions and your influence.

For example, at the end of next month, the end of October, we launch our Be Rich season, our Be Rich campaign. If you're not familiar with that, at our church every year in the fall we put out a list of serving opportunities and giving opportunities for our community and our extended community all around the world to do things for children, to do things for orphanages, to do things for the working poor, food banks, local schools that need help. We're going to put out hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of service opportunities, hundreds of giving opportunities. We have, this year, and I'm so excited about it, I can't give you the details because of time, we have the opportunity to go into some charities that we love and preserve jobs and create jobs.

Now, every time you turn on the news it's all about "Create jobs, create jobs, create jobs." I'm telling you, together as a group of local churches we have the greatest opportunity to create some jobs in some



significant places, and we can do it far less than the federal government, and that's no slam to the federal government. We're just on the ground and we're closer to what's happening. And if local churches can embrace this idea, which I think they will, and some have already begun to, I'm telling you, it could move the dial in our nation in terms of what's happening spiritually and what's happening in our local recovery. So my first challenge to you is this: in about a month when we rollout those opportunities at Buckhead Church, Brown's Bridge, and all of our local campuses, and at Athens Church, when we roll these things out I want you to get all over it. I want you to knock yourself out. I want the people in our communities to go, *Oh my gosh! What's up with those churches? You know I don't necessarily want to go there; I'm so glad they're in our community. Look at the difference that they're making.* We've done that in the past. This year I want us to kill it.

We're going to create some jobs, and preserve some jobs. We do the Operation Christmas Child shoebox. You know how we've done that? Last year we broke the record; we put together eight thousand shoeboxes; this year we're going to do ten thousand. Hey, why not do fifteen thousand? Why not just have the whole world go, *What is up with those Christians? They're so generous. I mean we're in the middle of a double dip recession and look at them go.* I'm telling you, this is our opportunity. So when those things rollout, I want you to just get all over it as a church, at all of our campuses, and again schools, charities, all kinds of stuff.

Then the second thing is this: at the beginning of this series I talked about that we don't have a financial problem as a nation. One of our problems is we have a greed problem. Greed says whatever you put in my hand, it's for my consumption. Christians are supposed to know better, but average Americans give about one and a half to two percent of their money away. And the reason they give that much away isn't because they planned to, it's because they get to the end of the year and they do their income tax and they discover that they have. It's not strategic; it's a discovery. *Oh, look at all those receipts. Oh yeah, Goodwill sent me . . . Oh, I gave away a . . .* And they don't even know what percentage it is. We're better than that. We're Christians, okay? We serve a Jesus who gave everything for us, and he's not even requiring everything. So I'm going to be straight with you, all right?

I've had you on training wheels for sixteen years. Here's what I've said consistently: *Hey, if you're not a giver we want you to become a percentage giver. That is, we want you to pick a percent and give it to your local church and adjust your lifestyle.* In 2012 I'm going to challenge all of you to become tithers—ten percent off the top to your local church for a year. Here's why. If we do this as a group of local churches and if we impact the community financially, which is what gets people's attention, like I know that we can, other churches will follow us. And in a year that promises financial pain for the rest of the country, God could use the church in the United States of America to be a financial blessing to individuals, to families, to single parents, to charities and to organizations that are on the ground doing the work. We can do this. Okay? This isn't even going to be hard.

So here's what I want you to do. I'm giving you three months to think about it. Okay? No more training wheels, no more three percent, no more five percent, no more I'm just going to give leftovers: ten percent off the top. I've been doing it since we started this church. I've sent your kids to camp while you were too afraid to give. I've helped pay for stuff. I've paid salaries. I've been doing this. I'm so happy to do it. I love our church.



You can't take away, or tax money I've given away. It's awesome. Most of you lost far more in the stock market than I did percentage wise because I've given so much away, ha, ha, ha, okay? I'm asking you to step up now.

Let me just say something. Those of you who are rich—I want to talk to the rich people because you've gotten accustomed to people singling you out and I don't want you to feel left out at church. So to all the rich people, okay, here's the deal—and I'm talking about the super-rich—some of you have enormous resources that you manage and you do not tithe to your local church. You give to your own fund, and then over time you give out of your fund. And you know what? That's wise in some cases. You sold a company; you had several million dollars. Last thing you want to do is just give it all away at one time; you decided you wanted to give it away over time. I get that. I'm all for National Christian Foundation, all those kinds of foundations, but here's my challenge to you: Beginning in 2012, I want to challenge you, and you can pray about it, you have three months. I want to challenge you to give that money to your local church.

And if you think that's too much money for a local church, go sit down with somebody in your local church, including our churches and say, *Okay, can you handle this much money? Can you be a good steward of this much money?* You owe them that conversation. But I want to challenge you to quit being . . . For one year, don't be a personal hero and don't be an individual hero—be a hero through your local church. I'm telling you, if every super-millionaire and billionaire who's a Christian would funnel his generosity through the local church . . . and I understand why you don't. I get that. But just for one year, it could move the needle. It could do something through the local church that is extraordinary, and next year is the year to do it. Okay?

So when we launch *Be Rich*, I want you to just be wild and crazy over *Be Rich*. Next year I want you to be in a position to where you can start tithing ten percent to your local church, to our local church. We will be an excellent steward with every dollar that's given, because I want to make sure this church is being an excellent steward with every dollar that my wife and my family and my kids give here. And if other churches will follow suit as they listen to these messages and as they take this challenge and as they take a challenge like today and take it to their own church, it could be absolutely extraordinary. And as we go through the year, we're going to do a better job helping you understand what your church does week in and week out in our local communities and all around the world.

And you know something—and I don't have time to go into this today—this is what the first century Christians did. They didn't have platforms, they didn't have churches, they didn't have microphones, they didn't have PA systems, they didn't have radio stations, they didn't have television stations. The first century Christians, they went around picking up babies off the riverside and adopting them and raising them. They went into cities where the plague was killing everybody and they nursed people back to health. They served and they gave and they served and they gave and they served and they gave, and within three hundred years, the Roman Empire had turned and looked at the Christians and said, *They're better people. Christianity is better than paganism.* And a whole empire turned upside down. Not because of preaching and not because of just teaching, but because of the kind of generosity that you have been a part of and that I've just challenged



you to for this next year.

And if you forget everything else, and if you lose sight of everything else, I want you to remember: recovery begins when we leverage our entitlements for the sake of those less entitled. And then here's the capstone verse that I think summarizes everything. I love this verse from Mark.

*Mark 10:45 (TNIV)*

*<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man*

That would be your Savior, the one we sing to, worship every Sunday.

*Mark 10:45 (TNIV)*

*<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served*

Wait, wait, even the Son of Man, who is entitled to be called and honored and worshipped as the Son of Man, did not come to be served, but he leveraged his entitlement.

*Mark 10:45 (TNIV)*

*<sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

That's my marching order as a Christian, that's your marching order as a Christian. And if we will just do this one thing well, our nation will recover. And Christians, the church will have led the way, and not to our glory, but to the glory of our gracious God, whom we love and we serve and in whom all things have been created and to whom all things are to point for his glory. So I want you to pray about it. I want you to think about it. I want you to go home and have conversations about how can we leverage our entitlements for the sake of other people. And then I want us to come together in about a month and I want us to rock our communities and our city with our generosity. Then next year we're going to start an avalanche, a tidal wave of generosity, all over this country as churches come together and get this right for the glory of God. All right?

Let me pray for you.