

For much of my adult life, I've been in the business of giving. That's included raising money for a university, raising money for children's healthcare, and growing philanthropy through the work of a community foundation.

The giving landscape in our country is changing. While the total dollars given to support not-for-profit institutions has continued to rise to all-time highs in recent years, the actual number of givers is declining. We've seen that right here at Northridge. And, it's predicted that the national tax reform enacted almost a year ago will put further downward pressure on giving in the years ahead by making the charitable deduction less valuable and less relevant to many Americans.

Yet, we know that the provisions of the tax code aren't why most people give, to either the places where they worship or to their favorite charities. People give in order to be faithful and to make a difference. Plus, we also know that Dallas is a particularly generous area of the country. We see that displayed every year on North Texas Giving Day, for example, like this past September 20th when many of us in this sanctuary joined with our neighbors and all together gave \$48 million dollars to local nonprofits in just 18 hours.

There's admittedly a lot of competition for our giving. Sometimes that creates a little giving fatigue and can make it hard to sort through the clutter of all the voices clamoring for our attention. The result is that we may simply not give.

In my own work, I've found that it's helpful to think about giving with a strategy in mind. When you invest your money, you don't invest in every stock and bond on the market. You make selections that fit your investment priorities.

Likewise, when you give your money, you should make selections that fit your giving priorities. As a result, you will feel the satisfaction of aligning your money with your values and watching how, together, they become a vital thread in the fabric of your community.

I'm a single dad who joined this church several years ago at a particularly tough time in my life. In addition to parenting, I also have a job which usually feels like I'm always on duty. So being physically involved in many aspects of Northridge is often hard for me.

However, financially supporting Northridge is something I always have the choice to do. Although there are a million ways I fall short, being faithful to God's expectations is a priority to me. Plus, giving here connects me with each of you and to the stories created by the ministries of our church. And, it also allows me to express my gratitude--both to a loving God and to a loving congregation.

Addressing first what goes into the offering plate at Northridge clears the way for me to see how else I can make a difference in our community, with what I have left to give and for the other things I care about, too. Unlike my professional life, that's not simply the business of giving. That's the joy of giving.

In this season of Thanksgiving, if you haven't done so already, I hope you'll experience that joy, too, and join me alongside so many others across the congregation in financially supporting Northridge.

Brent Christopher

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