

Choosing to Give the Rest to the Lord: My Journey of Faith

By Scott Lewis

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In 1984, I met my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and at that point my life did a complete 180, and I began to walk in the joy and the fullness of a relationship with God. I immediately got involved in whatever the church was doing. In other words, when I came to Christ, I hit the ground running and was immediately zealous for God.

In 1991, I was at a wedding with my wife, and on the way out of this wedding there was a man behind me talking about Russia, about a lot of people coming to know the Lord, and about something called the Jesus Film. I was interested, and so I asked him about it, and he said, "In a few weeks we are going down to Mexico to show the film out in the streets. Would you like to come along?" That sounded like fun to me, so I said, "Sure, I would like to come be a part of that." What I saw in Mexico had a phenomenal impact on my life. Through the weekend, I met Paul Eshleman, the director of the Jesus Film Project, and Dave Hannah, the head of History's Handful, and these gentlemen were sharing some things that had an impact on me.

I had never heard before that 80 percent of the world's Christian wealth was in America and that 96 percent of what we put in the plate was spent on America while America only made up roughly 5 or 6 percent of the world's population. I immediately was troubled when I heard that, knowing that the Scripture said, "From the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48b).

We went out and showed the Jesus Film in Mexico on a dirt lot with a generator to run the projector. Over 400 people came and sat in the rain to watch this film in the Spanish language. When it was over, 186 of them filled out on a card to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ. Those were given to the local pastor to follow up on. I thought, "Wow, this is the most powerful evangelistic tool I have ever seen."

While we were there, Paul Eshleman said, "In six weeks we are going into Albania, and we are going to show the premiere of the film." I went home and I told my wife all about this Jesus Film and all these folks who came to know the Lord, and I asked her, "Do you want to go to Albania in six weeks?" She said OK. So, we literally got our globe down and sat in the middle of our living room floor and were spinning this thing trying to find where in the world Albania was. I had never even heard of the place. Six weeks later we landed in Albania, and what happened there has completely changed my life forever.

Now, I was always very committed to the Lord and to seeing people come to know him, but what I saw there I had no idea existed anywhere in the world. For example, one particular day we were sharing the gospel with students at a high school. Following our presentation, I went down to the front of the school and was waiting for the rest of the team to show. There was a large crowd of people, and all of a sudden this young girl grabbed my arm, looked me right in the eye and said, "Sir, please, you have got to listen to me." I asked, "What is it?" She said, "Please, sir, don't waste time talking to people who don't want to know the God. All of my friends want to know the God, and so many people here want to know the God. Please don't waste time talking to people who don't want to know the God." I thought, God has just spoken to me through this girl.

We got home, and I said to my wife, "This is it." For years I had been frustrated in business. I had felt that business was a ball and chain around me because I really wanted to make my life count for God, yet seemingly so many hours of my day were spent doing the deal that it seemed to have no real impact for eternity. I said, "This is our out." We've got to get rid of the business, and we've got to get back to Albania, because everybody there wants to know God." So I set out to sell my business. But when the deal came down to the bottom of the ninth inning, it just unraveled. I said, "Fine, Lord, if you don't want us to get anything out of it, we will just liquidate the assets and we'll go." Two weeks before the business was to shut down, I woke up very early one morning, and the Lord was clearly prompting me, "No, I don't want you to go to Albania, and I don't want you to get rid of the business. I want you to stay right here." I didn't understand.

History's Handful

A couple of months later I was at a large conference with Campus Crusade for Christ. Dr. Bill Bright and Dave Hannah were there challenging people to become a part of this thing they called History's Handful. They described it this way: Over the course of history a handful of individuals have had a significant impact. If you think back about specific countries (Germany and South Africa) or periods (the Reformation and the civil rights movement), a handful of individuals come to mind who, good or bad, have had a significant impact on the course of history. Bill Bright said, "We have figured it out; we have broken the world up into chunks of 1,006,000 people each, and the cost of translating this film into all the languages of the world and buying all the equipment and doing the deal is \$1.2 billion. We want 1,200 people who will step up to the plate and give \$1 million each to impact eternity."

My wife and I were listening to this, and we thought, "Are they asking for \$1 million?" The problem was that we felt like God was telling us we were supposed to be one of those. So, that evening I went to Bill Bright and said, "Sir, how do we do this? We don't have \$1 million in our wildest dreams." He said, point blank, "How much did you give last year?" Nobody had ever come out and just asked me this. I said, "We gave \$17,000." I felt pretty good

because that was 35 percent of our income; grading on the curve, I thought we were doing pretty well. He said, “Good, but why don’t you start the first year with a goal of, say, \$50,000?” I said, “Excuse me?” He said, “Start with a goal of \$50,000.” I said, “Alright.”

We started selling tools; some weeks we made overhead, and some weeks we didn’t. We got all the way to the end of the year, and we were a long way from fulfilling that goal of \$50,000. I got a call one day from a guy in Jupiter, Fla. You can’t be any further away from California than Jupiter, Fla. This guy was looking for this machine. Long story short, 15 minutes before the phone call, I was looking at an auction flyer, and one of these machines that the guy wanted was coming up at a sale the next day, two hours from where I live. I made the buy on behalf of the customer, met a guy there looking for a machine twice as big, put a deal together on that one, and between those deals, the money came in. I called the guy back in Jupiter, Fla., and said, “How did you find out about us?” He said, “A dealer in Chicago told me to call Scott Machinery if you want one of these pipe benders; they handle them all the time.” Well, he meant the Scott Machinery in Helena, Ala. I had never even seen one of these units, let alone sold one. We were then very convinced that God had just done something incredible.

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The story is not over. We get the money in, and it is the end of the year, and we are saying to ourselves, “If we give all this money, we have just given away all the profit for the year. If we do that, how are we ever going to build this business to a point where it ever could give \$1 million?” I started wrestling with this by using logic, but logic gets you in trouble because it doesn’t always make God-sense. I realized that Satan was trying to keep me from fulfilling the goal, so I told my secretary, “Quick, write the check before I change my mind.” She did, and she sent it off. The next day we were closed for inventory. It’s the last day of the year, and about midway through the day we finished. We finished early, and I said, “Y’all are already here, do you want to just go ahead and work the rest of the afternoon?” “Yeah, okay.” So, we turned the “open” sign around, unlocked the door, started answering the phone, and we did \$65,000 that day in business, \$27,000 of which was profit. This was almost exactly the amount that we sent the day before to fulfill the commitment. “Wow,” we said, “God is huge.”

When Bill Bright had challenged us to start with a goal of \$50,000, he said, “Watch what God does to your business. I bet you the next year, you will be doubling that.” Well, hey, we are on a cloud—God can do anything—so we are going for \$100,000 this year. So, again, we worked all year long, and some weeks we made overhead and some weeks we didn’t. We got down to the end of the year, and there were no miracle deals. My secretary went in the office and camped out for a whole day, and she came back with all the payables and receivables. She said, “We’ve given \$57,000, we are \$43,000 shy, and that is almost exactly what we have in the account.” I said, “We can’t drain the

account. We've got to have cash flow to run a business, right? That is economics 101. Let me go home to think about it and pray about it. I went home and told my wife the situation, and no sooner had I stopped with the last word than she said, "I am a signer on the account, and if you don't write the check, I will." So, that was God's confirmation. The next day we went back and drained the account, and we sent the money in. I am here to tell you that each year subsequently, God has given more and more, and now we are in the habit of draining the account at the end of each year and sending the money.

I have a wife and four children, and we lived on \$49,000 last year. Three weeks ago, we did our year-end giving, and my goal for last year was \$175,000. My secretary called me in and said, "You want to know the numbers? We did it with \$345 left to spare." I just praised the Lord, and I called my wife and said, "We did it." She said, "But I've got a house payment due next week. I've got these bills to pay." I said, "Don't worry about the bills, keep your eyes on the Lord; remember he parted the Red Sea already for us." Sure enough, the following Monday He brought in some big deals and put money back in the account. So, we just keep trusting each step of the way. We basically have chosen a modest standard of living—we are not living poverty Christianity, but we are definitely living below what we could—and we are just choosing to give the rest to the Lord.

I am a missionary. I am using the skills and talents that God gave me to do business for the purpose of making money to fund the fulfillment of the Great Commission. My wife and I have experienced the power of God working through our lives, because we are hanging it out so far on the edge that if he doesn't do it, we are going to crash. I am telling you, my faith has been strengthened; I am experiencing more joy and more fulfillment than I ever have before. It is the most liberating experience to truly have God running your business, because when the big deal falls apart—big deal! It is his deal when it comes through, praise the Lord, and then we get to go shopping.

We get a pile of money, and we go shopping—not down at the local mall; we go shopping around the world to see where we can use this money to impact the kingdom of God. We have had a wonderful blessing, and I praise the Lord for it. By the end of last year, we had reached \$734,000, toward our goal of \$1 million. Depending on what God does this year, we are either going to hit it by the end of this year or probably midway through the next year. That is where we are tracking, and we are just thrilled.