

What is Faith Promise?

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfreda, Georgia. This is the next message in our series in the book of 2 Corinthians, entitled, We Faint Not.

Alright, go to 2 Corinthians chapter 8 if you would. Let's read the first few verses of that. And I'm going to give you a brief explanation of faith promise. Before we do, look this way before we read the scripture.

Let me just tell you this. There are no rules in the Bible about faith promise. Faith promise isn't something that the Bible commands you to do. We give because we want to. We give out of our heart. Fact is, when people talk about faith promise, often they make it almost a Bible doctrine that you ought to do faith promise.

But a guy named J. Oswald Smith came up with this plan back about, well, less than 100 years ago. He had probably the greatest missionary church of his day. They were given humongous amounts of money because they did learn to give by faith and they did learn to make a promise.

But I want you to know there's no sin and no guilt and there's no fussing at you if you don't do that. But I want to explain to you where the basis is. And I want to show you some of the things in the Bible about it.

[1 : 08] It's out of 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9 are the best chapters on this in the Bible. They would explain it. And there was a faith promise offering taken. But it wasn't even for missionaries.

It was for the church in Jerusalem. And the church in Jerusalem was going through a bad depression, recession, famine. Hard times were going on.

And the apostle Paul, loving the Jewish church that had gotten the gospel straight from Jesus. And Peter and James and the other apostles still working mainly out of Jerusalem. And the apostle Paul and Barnabas and the guys out in the Gentile churches decided that they would take up an offering.

And they did do it exactly like we do faith promise. They did. Paul went to their place and he told them, he said, I'll come back in about a year. And I'd like to know how much money y'all will collect between now and the time I get back.

And so basically Paul said to them, why don't y'all tell me by faith what y'all can collect over the year and go ahead and make a promise on it. And in fact, Paul even writes in this letter of 2 Corinthians and he reminds them, Now guys, you made a promise and please don't embarrass me because I've been going everywhere telling everybody about all the big promises that you made.

[2 : 17] And so I want to bring that right down to our missionaries. I'm even going to explain deputation to you. Some of you probably already know about it, but lots of you may have not. You may not have a full understanding. If you haven't lived it, I'm going to try my best to give you a pretty accurate picture of what they go through.

You heard Brother Starwalt tell the missionaries over and over. I didn't fully agree with this, but he said the hardest part of their life was deputation. Truth of the matter is, I think it's going to be a little harder on some of them learning the language. And I think it'll be a little harder on them adapting to culture.

But there is a lot of stress and it's a very difficult time in the life of a missionary when they are learning or when they're raising their support. I'll explain it to you in just a minute. Look at your Bibles in 2 Corinthians chapter 8.

Let's read verses 1 through 5 if we could. The Bible says, It says, Let's bow our heads for a word of prayer.

Father, bless this time of offering, time of preaching about the offering. Bless this time of explaining faith promise. And God, I pray that you would continue to bless senders here, that they would understand this crucial role that we play as we give sacrificially to send missionaries.

[3 : 54] And I just pray that you would help us to understand what goes on, to get our hearts in it. And I'll give you praise for all that you do. In Jesus' precious name, amen. Now, I'm going to run through the first part of this so I can explain the rest of it and still get you out well on time.

So if you take notes, write this down. Number one, they saw the need. What happens in the faith promise is they first saw the need. They knew there was a need back in Jerusalem.

And if you have your Bible or if you just want to write this down and check me out later, Acts chapter 11 and verse 29. If you've got a Bible, you ought to open it there. And this is the first thing. They saw the need.

And I want you to notice an extra bonus on the way through. Look at chapter 11, verse 29. The Bible says, So I want you to notice that they want to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Jerusalem.

So it's very clear what they're doing. They were sending relief to the brothers which live in Jerusalem. They were having a problem. They were in need. They didn't have a salvation army. They didn't have a goodwill store.

[4 : 58] They didn't have other people. And Christians were despised and hated. And they had been living there in the city. And they'd run out of money. And the famine had come. And hard times had come. And they needed help. And those churches saw the need.

If you've got your Bible open there, circle this in the verse. Nobody in our church ought to ever feel pressure to measure themselves by anybody else in their giving. Because if you look at the verse, he said, According to his ability.

Could you repeat those words with me? According to his ability. Could you say it with me? Are you ready? According. Do you understand? Isn't that beautiful? He didn't say to them, I want everybody to come up with a certain amount of money. I want everybody to do this.

They gave according to their ability. So the first thing I want you to see is this. They saw the need. Now I could take other verses and show them to you. But I'm not going to. For the sake of time, I'm not going to show them to you.

But let's just take this with missions. I hope you see the need. I hope you realize that all around the world, there's a great need. I hope you realize that Vision Baptist Church is an extremely unusual church.

[5 : 57] It is a church. It's unusual. By the way, all independent Baptist churches, all Baptist churches, all gospel preachers. I shouldn't say all. Not every one of them are doing the right thing. But any gospel preaching church is a very unusual thing around the planet.

There are places where you can't find a church. You should see the need. You should realize that our young people said and sang this week. And they sang songs that they would have no idea about.

You should realize that around the world, there are many, many, many places on the globe that have no idea what the Bible is or what it means. They don't understand what it means to be saved. They don't understand what it means to go to heaven.

They don't understand what it means to go to hell. They don't know that Jesus died on a cross for them. All they know is the guilt of their sin. And we ought to see the need as a church. And I think you have seen the need. How many of you have seen the need?

Say amen. You have. You've seen it. If you've traveled, you've seen it. If you listen to the missionaries, you've seen it. By the way, if you just step outside our doors and look around in our own city, you see the need.

[6 : 54] People need the Lord. Well, they need, they saw they needed a financial help. The numbers, the second thing you write down, the saints wanted to take part. Write that down. The saints wanted to take part. And then open your Bible to 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 4.

2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 4. The Bible says, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministry to the saints.

Now, underline praying and entreaty in that verse. You see, praying there is just an old-fashioned way of saying begging us. I pray the court. Or if you were listening to Shakespeare or you were listening to somebody with old language, I pray.

So praying is how, prayers, when we ask God. That's what it means. And they were praying. They said, please, Paul, let us get involved in sending an offering back to Jerusalem.

And it says entreaty. And entreaty is the idea of asking a lot. They were saying, please, we really want to get involved. They saw the need and they wanted to be involved. They saw the need and they wanted to be involved.

[7 : 56] By the way, this was an extremely poor church. This was definitely not Alpharetta. This was definitely not Alpharetta. This was probably something more on the lines of a church, a church probably maybe in one of the foreign countries that we know where they don't make near the money.

We do look at chapter 8, verse 2 to see what kind of condition they had. The Bible said, how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded under the riches of their liberality.

Underline in your Bible, great trial of affliction. Now, you know, some of us have been going through some trials. Some of us have had some fine, not me. When I say us, I'm just being nice and concluding me with you. Some of you I know have hurt.

I know some of you have lost your jobs. I know some of you dealt with issues. This church, this church, they're begging Paul to let them give the offering. And yet at the same time, they're having a great trial, a great trial of affliction.

I mean, they are suffering. Affliction, that's the word that's used. Great trial of affliction. And then it says, in case you didn't gather it, it's always funny to me, God is almost redundant in his word.

[8 : 59] He's like, I'm afraid y'all won't get it. So he said, great trial of affliction. Then he throws in two more words to make sure you got it. Deep poverty, deep poverty. Now, I have lived most of my life just below the poverty line.

I've lived just below the poverty line. So I don't pay taxes. I'm one of those guys that doesn't pay very much taxes and never have paid very many taxes. But can I just explain to you? I'm a pretty rich guy. I mean, I'm rich even in the United States.

Drive nice vehicles, live in a nice house, got nice things, got a nice cell phone. And when you take me outside this country, put me around the world, I'm like a multimillionaire. I really don't know about poverty.

I really don't know about poverty. I did grow up on a farm. I did grow up without shoes. The first day I went to school, I mean, there were a lot of little issues in my life. But you know what? I never, I can't understand poverty.

I never, ever went without a meal except when I did it on purpose. And I certainly don't understand deep poverty. I certainly don't understand deep poverty. I have seen people in deep poverty.

[10:00] By the way, Ronald Tobias understands deep poverty. I can tell you that Ronald Tobias has lived where they really, literally didn't know where they would get food. They literally didn't know where they would get food.

I can tell you about Peruvians that I know that lived in deep, I know a family. I know a family in Hunter that the little boy was so, that was a city I first worked in, the part of Adiquipa I worked in. And the little boy got so hungry and his daddy, to try to get the hunger pains to go away, would punch him in the stomach.

And he punched him in the stomach to help him forget the pain of being hungry. And he actually killed his son and we buried his son. He almost got charged with murder. And when we asked the family what happened, he literally hit it dumb.

He shouldn't have done it, but it literally deep. We've never, I don't think any of us would understand it. They saw the need and they wanted to be involved, even though they were very, very poor.

Or chapter 8 and verse 3, it was to their power what they were able to do. I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, beyond what they were able to do, they were willing of themselves.

[10:58] These people said, man, we want to send an offering to Jerusalem. Paul basically sees the church and says, you guys are too poor. I'm not letting you give an offering. And they begged him to give, even though they're extremely, extremely poor.

And then they first gave themselves. First thing was, they saw the need. Second thing was, the second thing was they wanted to give. The third thing was, they made a promise. They made a promise.

In this passage, they make a promise. That's very similar to what we're doing with this little piece of paper right here. We make a promise. We call it faith promise because we're going to say, we're going to do this.

And sometimes people ask me, well, what happens if it doesn't come in? I've got a better one for you. What happens if you die before your faith promise comes in? Well, we're not going to hold you accountable. Say amen. And we didn't get your name on the list.

And nobody's going to come in. But it's a step where you say, God, I really want to get involved and I want to give. And so they made a promise. And it was like a faith promise. Read the verse with me. Second Corinthians chapter 8, verse 10.

[11:55] And herein I give my advice. Herein I give my advice. For this is expedient for you who have begun before not only to do, but also to be forward a year before, a year ago.

Now, therefore, perform the doing of it. That is, there was a readiness to will. So there may be a performance also out of that which you have. You heard Brother John explain that extremely well this morning.

They made a promise. And now there's time for the performance of it. They were ready to will. They were ready, a readiness to will. And now it was time to get the job done. In other words, a year ago, and it's right there in the verse.

It says to be forward a year ago. A year ago, the man, when they were all sitting around, the pastor basically walked up. We used to do this when we were building in Peru. We'd walk up and say, all right, we really need to do some building here.

Who could give, who could give some bricks? How many bricks could you give? And who could give some sheets of tin? And how many sheets of tin could you give? And somebody would say, well, I'll buy a load of sand.

[12 : 50] And somebody else would say, well, I'll get the water for it. And that's how we would often do things that the people would give. And so what happened in this passage here is they were sitting around. Paul said, guys, I need to take an offering back to Jerusalem.

The saints are hurting. I'll come back in a year to collect what y'all want to give. And I don't know if they wrote it on a piece of paper. I kind of doubt they did. I don't think they had printers. And I doubt they were all that good at writing.

And it certainly wasn't Fred Flynn. So they didn't chip it in a rock. But somehow they made a promise. Maybe they raised their hand. Maybe they just stood up and said, hey, I tell you what, pastor, I'll give this much. They made a promise very much like we do.

Paul says in chapter 9, verse 1, 2 Corinthians 9, verse 1, For as touching the ministry to the saints is superfluous for me to write you. In verse 9, Paul says, I'm writing you.

And really, this is kind of over the top and extra. I know you really don't need me to remind you. Look at this. It's beautiful. It's like it's over the top. And it's really kind of extra, superfluous.

[13 : 47] It's more than I need to do to write you. He's been bragging on them. Chapter 9, verse 2. I know the forwardness of your mind. I know how you guys are. I know how willing you are.

I know the forward-lookingness of your mind. And I boast about you. I brag about you. And your zeal has provoked many. Your zeal has provoked many. Paul would go all over the place saying, you guys are just unreal.

And then he would just go out there to these other churches and say, you're not going to believe what the church down at Macedonia did. And so other churches said, well, if Macedonia can do that, we can do that. And so all of a sudden there was this big offering Paul was going to collect and take back to them.

Chapter 9, verses 3 and 4. He said, yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain. Underline this. Lest our boasting of you should be in vain.

Paul says, I send the guys back so my bragging wasn't wasted. So that you really do come through. He says that, and underline it, verse 3, the last four words there. Ye may be ready.

[14 : 44] Paul said, I'll be coming by to get the offering and I want you all to have it ready. I don't want me to look bad for having bragged on you and I don't want you to look bad. Verse 4, look at it. Lest happily if they have Macedonia come with me, find you unprepared.

We that we say not ye should be ashamed in this confident boasting. Paul said, now look, you saw the need and you wanted to give and you made a promise. And I'm reminding you of that promise.

You made a promise and I'm reminding you of that promise, so I don't want you to get messed up. Well, we don't really remind you a lot around here. And you've really learned and you know exactly what you're doing. I mean, you give faithfully and it's been coming in.

And we don't, we, I mean, honestly, I don't, I try to never harp on the giving. Brother John does offering devotions. But I don't think anybody in this room could say he harps on what you give. Or he says anything in a way to goad you or manipulate you or guilt you.

I don't think that goes on around here. But Paul did write on a letter and say, he just wrote on a letter and said, he sent some guys by. He said, just remind them. Guys, get the offer ready. Paul's coming and he's bringing some of those guys he's been bragging on you about.

[15 : 46] He's been telling all them people over in Macedonia. He's been going up to Tennessee and telling them what a great church's vision church is. And he's coming by to get that offer. And I hope y'all really come through. So they made a promise.

They made a promise. Then number four, Paul reminded them of God's promises. They made a promise and Paul reminded them of God's promises. Look what God promised. Chapter nine, verse six.

This I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly. And he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. I want you to stop here. Let me just say something to you.

I am always, I'm kind of burnt by preachers that play money games. I hate it when they send in a hundred dollars and I'll send you a cut off my t-shirt.

So it's my sweaty t-shirt I used when I was preaching and had the super anointing on me and it'll help you. Or send a hundred dollars and maybe God will give you 10,000. I don't believe in any of that.

[16 : 44] But can I just stop right here and tell you that there is a Bible truth in the Bible. It's really kind of all the way through it. Give and it shall be given. God said if you're a giver, God gives to you.

God said the way you sow, that's the way you reap. And that's one of the reasons God has blessed and prospered people like you and me. He's prospered us because we have been givers. And here's what he said.

He said, hey guys, I'm going to take that offering up, but I want to remind you of something. Y'all made a promise to keep a promise. Then he said this. He said, guys, the amount of blessings you're going to get out of this deal is going to be according to how you give.

So if you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly. But that's not to manipulate you into giving because in verse 7 he said, But you give as you purpose in your heart. You give as you purpose in your heart.

Not grudgingly. Not of necessity. For God loves a cheerful giver. Verse 8. He said, and God is able to make all grace abound toward you.

[17 : 39] So that always having all sufficiency in all things, you may abound to every good work. You may abound to every good work. Now, I'm going to rush through this, but let me just stop.

I really do want to say this to you. There are very definite promises in the Bible about our giving and about God blessing. Ever since I was a little boy, I was taught to tithe.

And I started tithing and then I started giving. And I have watched God richly bless us, giving wise. I'm just going to stop and tell you one story. And this is the honest truth.

We were in Arequipa. And I had the Peruvian pastor with me in the car. And we drove up to Mariscala Castilla, which was a field marshal general, Castilla's street.

And we drove up there and I saw one of the men of the church. And we pulled over and I said, hey, what are you doing? And his name was Beto Rivera. And he was buying a gas stove. And we got in the car.

[18 : 41] I mean, we talked to him. I asked him if you want to help him get him home. He said, no, I brought enough money to pay a taxi to help me carry the stove home. And he was just so excited. He was buying a gas stove. You really don't understand that.

I mean, I know you don't understand that. But, I mean, most of those families in Peru back then used to cook on what was called a primus. And it was kind of like those campings lights you use where you pump them, pump them, pump them.

Except they use that and they make heat with it. And you could set a thing on there and you could cook on top of that. It turned everything black the way it cooked. And that's what most people were using. Lots of people use that in their homes, the poor people in my church.

And he was buying a gas stove. And we turned and rolled off. Carlos looked at me and this is what he said. Are you believing that? When you came into this town, he would have never, ever dreamed he could have done that.

But you taught him what God teaches. And you taught him about giving. And God's been blessing him because he's a giver in our church. And now he's buying a stove. You'd probably never think that was a big deal. But it was like a big deal.

[19 : 39] When we came down that hill like shouting how good God was. We watched people learn. If you quit buying all that booze and if you quit doing all that junk you ought not do. And you start honoring God with your money, it's amazing what God will do.

God's promised you to bless you. And I believe that he has blessed us. Number five. Paul was going to pick up the offering and he was going to deliver the offering to the church in Jerusalem. In Acts chapter 11 verse 29.

The Bible said, Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. Which also they did. And sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

So they didn't have a way to deposit it in the bank. There wasn't anybody going to be able to take an ATM card and get it out in Jerusalem. Paul came by and he got the offering. And he picked that offering up. He got the offering from them. And he and Barnabas and they took some other guys to make sure that they counted the offering here.

And they counted the offering there to make sure that they really got all the offering. Paul said, I want to make sure everybody knows I'm not stealing any of it. I want to make sure all of it gets to where it's going. And they took that offering. In fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 16 and verse 2, he reminded them, You guys take up your offerings so that when I come by, when I come by, you'll have the offering ready.

[20 : 48] They were to lay apart. They were to lay aside. So when he got there, the offering would be ready. So I just want you to, let's go real quickly through that. Now I'm going to explain to you just a little bit. In the next few minutes, I'm going to explain about deputation and how that works.

But they saw a need. They saw a need. I think we see a need. We see the need about the gospel getting to India. We see the need about all these countries getting the gospel. I think we see a need. I think you've proven that you want to give.

I mean, I don't know how you gave 725,000 approximately to world evangelism. If you didn't want to give, I think you must want to give. I think almost anybody I tell that, they're like in shock. And then I say, well, we only run about 100 on Sunday night.

And in the auditorium on Sunday morning, we got 85 to 115 in the auditorium. And that's what they give all together on a Sunday morning, 175 people. And people are like in shock that you give the kind of money that you give.

So I do believe you want to give. And then they made a promise. They found out about the need. They wanted to give. And they made a promise. And Paul reminded them of the promise so they'd be ready. And then Paul took up the offering.

[21 : 47] Now, how does that work in the life of a missionary? If I could remind you. You know we're supposed to take the gospel. So I'm not going to go into that. You've heard that all week. You want to take part in it.

And here's what you do. You make a promise so we can have a budget. As a church, we need a budget. We need an idea of what we can do. And so what you're going to do is on your tithe check or on your giving check, we write this is what we're giving for church and this is what we're giving for missions.

You write it on two checks. You can put it in an envelope and write on the envelope. Just make it clear this goes to missions and this goes there. And we will respect John and the counters will respect what you give.

And I don't ever know what you give. I know totals. I know what we take. I know we've given 725,000. I don't know. But the church will respect what you ask there. So you ask God, God, what do you want me to do?

And you give. And every week we work towards that offer and we work towards getting it. Now, I want to take about five minutes. I want to explain deputation to you real quickly. You know, you see mysteries around here all the time.

[22 : 53] And it could easily be confusing to you. You know, the average church, they see a missionary come in. Austin Gardner came off the field. He came to your church. He stood up behind a pulpit. He preached. He was there for 30 minutes, 45 minutes during the service.

He was preaching. Then he left and he won the other church. And yet we got missionaries here all the time. So I just thought I'd explain a little bit how deputation works. Let me say this. Deputation is a good thing. You don't need to feel sorry for these missionaries.

You don't need to feel sorry for the way we do it. It's honestly a good thing. And it's worked very well. But God sends out people around the country. And we raise our support.

So missionaries came in. This week, all these missionaries came. Ten missionaries were here with us. They came here hoping and praying that Vision Baptist Church would partner with them and support them in a certain amount of money.

They're all going to need somewhere \$6,000 to \$8,000 a month. They're going to need whatever it costs. If you're a Macedonian missionary, your insurance is going to be right over \$1,000 a month already to have health insurance.

[23 : 49] So you're going to need insurance. And you're going to need airfare. And you're going to need living expenses. And you're going to need expenses as you get the ministry set up. You're going to need expenses for your language school.

You're going to need all the things it costs to set up a house. And so they travel. And by the way, the first few weeks of that is probably very interesting and very exciting. Because they get in their car and, you know, you ever notice how we are?

Most of us, if we're going to make a trip to Florida, we get excited about it. Like, hey, man, we're going to go down to Miami. We're going to go to the Keys. Hey, we're going to go down to the coast. We're going to go somewhere and we make a trip. And that's like a, I mean, it's a pretty big deal.

We're going to drive 12, 15 hours. We're going to get to such and such a town. And that's probably pretty interesting and most mysterious the first week or the second week or the third week. But when you do that, like every week for a year or two years, there comes a time when you look at the car and you're like, Oh, my father in heaven, please deliver me from sitting in that seat.

And if you've got a small child, your child is like screaming, Please don't strap me into that baby seat and tie me down for the next 42 hours while we ride to the next town. You know, they do have modern conveniences.

[24 : 55] My kids didn't have to be strapped in. There weren't seatbelt laws back when we were doing this. But, you know, they do have some modern conveniences. They put a DVD player in there. Some of them got a van. They even put a little potty in there so their little kids can go back and sit on the potty against the law.

But that way they don't have to stop. But they're going to travel from church to church. And here's the way it happens. They get on the phone. And like the guys that get into our church, except the ones that are members of our church, here's what you do. Basically, you make somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 phone calls.

So you pin on the phone. You pick up the phone. You dial a pastor's number. And you get a busy signal or you get a wrong number or you get pastors dead. Sometimes they'll call a pastor. And when they call the church, they get a hold of the church secretary.

And they say, could I speak to Pastor Gardner? And the secretary says, he's not in. And they say, well, what would be a good time to reach him? And they have secretaries that have literally been known to say, well, that's going to be difficult. He died.

I remember calling one when I was on deputation. And I said, I said, could I speak to Pastor so-and-so? And it was on my chart, my piece of paper. That was what his name was. I said, could I speak to Pastor so-and-so?

[25 : 56] And the guy said, I'm sorry. He died. I said, I am so very sorry. I said, who is the current pastor? And the guy told me his name. And it was the same last name. And I said, well, brother, I'm very sorry.

I asked for him. And he said, that was my dad. I never got support out of that church. I don't know what offended him. His daddy died or me calling about it. But you know, you call and so you make about three or 4,000, 5,000 phone calls.

You get a hold of 1,000 pastors. You need to talk to about 1,000 pastors. Not that difficult because there's 15,000 independent Baptist pastors in America. But you got to talk to about 1,000 of them.

And when you talk to 1,000 of them, you got to get into about 300 churches is basically the way it works. So you got to come like they did this week to about 300 churches. So you got to come in. And it's a dog and pony show.

Your kid does not want to go to this nursery. And you may think we have a nice nursery. But your kid's thinking, I've seen a gazillion nurseries and I hate nurseries. And every sweet mama in the church comes up and pinches them on the cheek and goes, oh, you're so cute, baby.

[26 : 57] You're going to love our Sunday school class. And the kid's like, no, I won't. I didn't like it in the last 200 churches. And I ain't going to like it this time either. And so they come in. And they know, man, the pastor's eyeballing them.

And the deacons are eyeballing them. And everybody's checking them out. And so they made 3,000 to 5,000 calls, contacted 1,000 preachers, getting 300 churches. And Lord willing, 100 of them will take them on for support.

100 of them will take them on for support. You know, some churches will support it ridiculously small amounts. And some will support it larger amounts. And you get a hold of those churches. And you, after driving about 100,000 to 150,000 miles over a two-year period, they'll take you on for support.

And you can go to the mission field. The reason Brother Starwalt said it's hard is because as soon as you walk into church, every pastor, when you first call that pastor, he doesn't want you to come because he's got so many people calling him.

We get regular calls. We actually have a system set up to screen them so I don't have to deal with them. And I used to be a missionary. And I used to have to make those calls. But I am a sucker. And so everyone that calls, I would let them come.

[28 : 03] And when they call me, I'm like, man, I feel for you. We couldn't help you if we tried. But I'll tell you what, I'll get you 75 bucks if you're looking for a place to preach. So the guys on the staff say, would you please not talk to the missionaries?

And let us screen the missionaries. And so they screen the missionaries. And that's how we keep the number down as low as we do. Because, you know, a pastor may average three or four calls a day for periods of time. And then when they call, we say, fill out the application.

Now, our church has a little application missionary fills out. And that application basically tells me what kind of ministry they want to have. But other churches, that application will be, how does your wife dress? I've had them ask what my wife slept in.

They'll ask questions like, what Bible I use? What music I use? Do I go to movies? And it can be up. I've had them filled up to 10 pages long. I had one church, big church, no longer a big church.

But they sent the form to me. And they sent me like 25 questions and said, each question must be answered on a separate sheet of paper. And I was in Peru. And one of the questions was, one of the questions was something like, I can't remember.

[29 : 08] The question was like, do you go soul winning? And so I just wrote, yes, and flipped the sheet and took out another sheet of paper. I don't know what they wanted me to write on that sheet of paper. And so I mailed them all those blank sheets of paper with one word at the top.

Yes, no, maybe. You know, and I answered the question. So after they get all that done, after they get all that done, then it's really a great thing. Because it's kind of a weeding process.

We figure out what missionaries we want to support. Our church currently supports, I think, 42 missionaries. We give around \$8,000 a month goes out to steady support to missionaries.

And those people become the ones that you see Trent ask you to pray for. They're our strategic partners. Strategic partners are what we call the guys we've chosen to partner with that are not members of our church. And then staff and teachers are the guys whose pictures are on the back or not yet on the back are going to be.

And they're members of our church. And so we give them money. We give the lowest. We give us \$50. I think we give the Prue Bible College around \$850. Am I close or something like that?

[30 : 09] We give the Prue Bible College like \$850 a month. And so we support these missionaries. So what's faith promise? Faith promise is our side of that equation. And I can promise you it may look like a luxurious life that every week pastors take you out to eat.

I remember preaching one missions conference. Of course, I did all my deputation in one year. And I preached this missions conference down in middle Georgia, kind of on the Alabama line. And the pastor put me in the Jamison Inn. Betty's not with me.

And basically I was alone all day, which is fine with me. And he opened me an account at Shoney's. And he said, anything you want to eat, just walk over to Shoney's and get you something to eat. And he took me to Shoney's. And he would come by.

Sometimes he'd say, I'd like to meet you for lunch. And we'd go to Shoney's. And he doesn't mean for supper. We'd go to Shoney's. And I ain't got anything to get to Shoney's. But I promise you, every time I go by him right now, I still cross myself and say, oh, Lord, please not again.

And so you don't know where you're going to be. You don't know what missionaries you're going to go with. So that's their part. They're going to travel. They're going to raise the money. Pastors are going to criticize them. Church people are going to criticize them. Did you see the way that kid was running around?

[31 : 10] Did you see the way that kid wouldn't behave? You took care of that kid to nursery. Wasn't that terrible? So that's one side of it. Our side, we're given. We're given to help them go. And I'll be honest with you. I love tonight.

When this service is over, I'm going to go home. And I'm going to crawl into my own sleep number bed. I'm going to pull my cover up. I will have the air conditioner on 72.

And if that's a little hot, I'm going to bump it to 71. You say, how come it's so hot in your house? Because I don't have your money. No, some of you are saying, man, I ain't ever had my house. That cool. And I'm going to sleep.

And I'm going to get up in the morning. We'll do what I want to do. And I don't have to travel. And my long trips now, my long trips, I mean, buddy, when I have to go to, I'd go to the airport to 7 to take somebody down there. I used to do that all the time.

Now, long trips. So I'm like, how in the world did I ever take that? So just remember this. That's what faith promises. You're giving. They're going. You're praying. They're going. And they'll soon land on the field.

[32 : 06] And honestly, they'll find that probably it was harder to learn a language and to deal with culture than it was to raise money. But maybe that gives you a little bit of an idea. Father, I pray you bless our people. I thank you for them.

I thank you for the chance to have them here. I thank you for what you've been doing this week. I thank you for their giving and their going. And I just pray you bless every one of them in Jesus' name. Amen. You have been listening to Austin Gardner, pastor of Vision Baptist Church.

For contact information, location, service times, or more audio and video recordings, log on to www.visionbaptist.com.