



# INVESTING 101

## *Lipscomb alumni pay back 'Dr. G' during his bout with cancer in 2018*

On March 3, 2018, Chair of Biology Kent Gallaher discovered he suffered from renal carcinoma: kidney cancer.

On Tuesday March 6, 2018, former Dean of Student Life **Scott McDowell** lead a prayer for Gallaher in Lipscomb's weekly chapel service. Over the course of the next 12 hours, "Dr. G," as he is lovingly called by Lipscomb students, received almost 300 contacts on social media from friends, family, church family and former and current students... many, many students.

He received hand-written letters from alumni all over the nation and world. One alumnus, a surgeon, flew from New Jersey just to sit with his family during Gallaher's surgery, which occurred less than a week after his diagnosis. Another alumna, now a nurse, rallied her fellow alums to collect inspirational Bible verses which were sewn into a "cancer blanket," with the motivational message, "Losing is not in my DNA."

Current students also showered encouragement on Gallaher, gathering at

the hospital to pray and keep watch with his family during the surgery, coordinating a prayer vigil in front of McFarland to take place during the surgery, gathering to cook him dinner on his first night home from the hospital and providing apparel, inspirational books and gift cards, among other gift

The outpouring of alumni and student encouragement was "overwhelming," Gallaher said, but it was also decades in the making. Gallaher has taught at Lipscomb for 18 years and has spent a portion of every day "investing" in the community of students at Lipscomb.

And years before that, Gallaher learned the value of such investment when he experienced the benefits himself as an "emotionally guarded and spiritually broken" transfer student at Lipscomb in the 1980s.

One month to the day after his cancer diagnosis, Gallaher was at the podium at Lipscomb's weekly chapel service, bringing the message to students that "you can't wait until you need it to invest in your community." Read on to see Dr. G's story in his own words taken from that April 2018 chapel speech and an annual talk he gives for prospective students and their families.

### **EXCERPTS FROM THE ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL WEEKEND SPEECH**

There's a lot of "stuff" that can get in the way of your healthy social/emotional/spiritual development. I came to Lipscomb in the 1980's. I was a 24-year-old transfer student, who had previously been dismissed from another Christian college when I was 20. So for several years I had lived a difficult life. When I arrived at Lipscomb I was hardened, emotionally guarded and spiritually broken.

But I met people at Lipscomb whom God used to change my life. Professors who gently began the process of softening me and who invested their lives in my recovery. Men and women who showed me how to live as a mature Christian should. They became my mentors.

Several of them have now passed away, but I can tell you that their fingerprints are on my life. Their influence can be seen in my marriage, how I parented my children and in my choice of career. Those godly people will be part of my life for the rest of my life.

It's a beautiful thing really. At Lipscomb you are surrounded by men and women who have made the conscious decision to minister



in higher education. We have chosen to be at this place, at this time, because we know that someone like you might need to know someone like us.

You see at Lipscomb, it's really all about relationships. Mentoring manifests itself in some of the most personal and memorable moments in life.

I could tell you about all of the students that I've lead to Christ over a 22-year career. Or about a couple named Brandon and Savannah whose wedding I officiated in May. Or of the international students that my wife and I have fostered from places like Brazil, Madagascar, Scotland, Rwanda and the Czech Republic. Or of the students I've mentored in research and with whom I have travelled the world. Or of the social club for which I serve as faculty sponsor.

The bottom line is this: I have discovered that authentic mentoring relationships are time consuming, sometimes uncomfortable and often involve personal sacrifices, but the payoff is beyond compare!

You see, when that day comes—when my career is over and I reflect on whether I did anything significant with my life—that's when they will come to me. I will see their faces in my mind's eye. All those former students that I've mentored, not just in science, but in life. They will be my evidence of a life well lived in service to my God.

## EXCERPTS FROM THE APRIL 2018 CHAPEL SPEECH

I have thought a lot about what it means to belong to a community.

What I have learned through this last month, is that God shows up through the kindness

of his people. There are lots of passages in Scripture that I grew up with, that you probably grew up with, that are so familiar: I Thessalonians 5:11, "Encourage one another, and build one another up;" Galatians 6:2, "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ;" and I Peter 4:10, "As each has received a gift. Employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

If God has put something in you, then you use it as a manifestation of God's grace in the life of someone else.

The Tuesday after I received my diagnosis, my good friend Scott McDowell came in here and led this group in prayer for me. Then campus life put out that they were going to have a prayer meeting for me on the Thursday morning of my surgery. When the news that I had cancer hit social media, I can tell you that over a 12-hour period that day I was contacted by almost 300 people. Some were my church family, some were my personal family, but the vast majority were students. Some of you in this room.

I've literally taught thousands of kids. I have hundreds of former students who are doctors, dentists and pharmacists. The encouragement that I began to receive was overwhelming. I know what it feels like to belong to a community.

And then the letters. The personal letters from places all over the country, from New Jersey, Ohio, Minnesota, Oregon, California, Texas, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia and North Carolina, and around the world from Japan, China, the UK, Spain and Madagascar. All of them saying the same thing: You made a difference in my life.

And if you need anything. If you need me to fly from New Jersey and sit with your

family? I'm on a plane. That was one of my former students who is now a head and neck surgeon in New Jersey. You need me to come from Lubbock, Texas, and take care of your family? I'll be there tomorrow. God shows up through the kindness of his people.

That's what I've been living the past month. So what's the lesson? You can't wait until you need it to invest into community. Being part of a community, belonging to a community is a conscious decision. It is a choice. Let me encourage you today to start investing in your community.

Every morning I come to the university at 6:30 a.m.; I make coffee for the department; I read a psalm. I reach up on my computer monitor and take off a prayer list; I have 41 names. And I finish that prayer every day the same way: "God show me the student that needs you the most today. Give me the courage to approach that student. Give me the wisdom to minister to that student. Help me to love them sacrificially."

I try to invest in my community every day, and any love I have shown you, or all those other hundreds of people who were my students who are working now, it came back to me this last month a thousand-fold.

Let me just encourage you to actively look for ways to be a blessing to somebody's life today. Shake the numbness off and actively look for ways to be a blessing every day. And then when it is your turn (and this was so hard for me), set the pride aside and receive the blessing when it's your turn. The most beautiful thing in the world folks is to love and be loved. Let's do that!

© Hear Kent Gallaher's complete April 2018 chapel speech, online at <http://bit.ly/DrGGathering>.

