

Proportionate Giving

We must talk about a crucial concept. It is the principle of proportionate giving.

Proportionate giving involves two points:

1. That our level of giving needs to rise out of our level of income.
2. That giving out of thanks for God's blessings will involve sharing a portion of that income with others. This is proportionate giving.

A great deal is said today about tithing as the highest form of proportionate giving. The 10 percent tithe has often been held up as the standard for Christian stewards. And there are a great many advantages to endorsing such a standard.

1. It is a biblical standard.
2. It is related to income and not to a congregation's budget.
3. It has "universality" about it, in that the concept is as old as the early Old Testament.

In spite of these advantages, it is a legalistic system and it is an Old Testament concept that is not picked up in the New Testament.

The fact is that no specific percentage adequately expresses our stewardship before God. It is in the qualities of thankfulness, love, and joy that the concept of proportionate giving has its foundation. We express these qualities in a practical manner. The system can be described very easily. Take your annual gross income and simply multiply it by the percentage that you want to share with God in your material giving. Then divide that amount by the weeks in one year. The amount you come up with seldom comes out to even dollar amounts, but that has the real value of moving away from the prison that puts gifts in round numbers without basing the giving on any systematic measure. A weekly gift of an odd amount, \$9.23, for example, will continually focus attention on the percentage and will be a constant affirmation of the person as a proportionate giver every time the check is written. The major advantages of proportionate giving are:

1. It puts the emphasis where it belongs on giving out of income.
2. It keeps us honest about our giving; honest about the real value of our gift in relation to what we have. The measure is not by pure dollar amounts, against what others with more can give, or against what others with less are able to give. The measure remains where it needs to be, yourself against yourself, what you give against what you have.
3. It allows every person to stand on equal ground as a giver. The giver with modest income who gives 3 percent of that income can be affirmed in this giving along with the big giver who gives 3 percent of a much larger income. The dollar amounts will vary considerably, but each is sharing equally with God through the Church out of what God has provided.