

Without apology the New Testament places a great deal of emphasis on the subject of giving. There are commands, practical suggestions, warnings, examples, and exhortations concerning this important matter. Everywhere in the Scriptures miserliness, greed, and avarice are denounced; and generosity, hospitality, and charity, extolled. The same word that is used for our fellowship with the Lord is also used in relation to the fellowship of the collection of money (2 Cor. 8:4) emphasizing the high spiritual character of giving. Further, this grace of giving is a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:8) accessible to all believers to have and to use. It is a gift which all can exercise whatever be the individual's financial status, and it is one of the high order among the believer's ^{actual} privileges and responsibilities.

What should be one's guide in grace giving? Perhaps the New Testament passage which sets forth most succinctly the basic principles of giving is I Corinthians 16:2: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him that there be no gatherings when I come." In this single verse there are laid down four principles of giving ~~today~~.

(1) Giving is a personal matter--let every one of you. Like most of the commands concerning Church life in the New Testament the ~~com regula~~ matter of giving is a personal thing. In which every believer sustains a direct and ^{individual} ~~personal~~ relationship to God as if he were the only Christian in the world. When you or I fail to give, the entire Church is weakened, for like the proverbial chain, the Church is no better than its weakest member. It is a peculiarity of grace conduct under grace that in most things we are left to determine our individual responsibility before the Lord. Though it might be convenient at times to have corporate commands in the life of the church, individual commands ^{enforce} ~~make mandatory~~ individual responsibility.

(2) Giving is to be proportionate--as God hath prospered him.

No hard and fast rule concerning ~~propoz~~ the amount is ~~setzdowaziaz~~ to be found among New Testament principles of giving. This is in sharp contrast to the regulations Old Testament, ~~tithe~~ which required that a tenth of all be given to the "levites (Lev. 27:30-33) ~~plus a tenth of the remaining nine-tenths~~ who in turn tithed what they received and gave it to the priests. In addition, Jewish practice Jews understood that a second tithe (a tenth of the remaining nine-tenths) ^{to be} was set apart and consumed in a sacred meal in Jerusalem (those living too far from Jerusalem could bring money) (Deut 12:5,6,11,18). Further, every third year another tithe was taken for the "levites, strangers, fatherless, and widows (Deut 14:28-29). Thus the proportion was ~~well~~ clearly specified, and every Israelite was obligated to bring to the Lord approximately 22% of his yearly income. In contrast the New Testament merely says "as God hath prospered him." This may mean 8%, 12%, 20%, 50% or even more depending on the individual case. It may also mean variation in proportion, for there is no reason to believe that the proportion suitable for this year will be ^{adequate} sufficient for next year. Each time the Christian gives he is to reflect on God's blessing in his life and determine what proportion in return ~~will~~ he will give to God.

(3) Giving is to be in private deposit--lay by him in store. Contrary to the usual belief the Christian is not told to turn his gift into the Church treasury each Sunday. The word "in store" means to gather and lay up, to heap up, or treasure; and the reflexive pronoun "to himself" indicates that it is to be kept in private, not public, deposit. This picture clearly set forth in this phrase is of a private gift fund ~~setzaz~~ into which the believer places his proportionately determined gift, and out of which he distributes to specific cases. This does not mean that either the giving into such a fund or the paying out from such a fund is spasmodic. Neither does this mean that regular giving or even pledging is contrary to the New Testament principles of giving (cf. 2 Cor. 8:10-11 where a pledge was made). But it does mean that

however small, (however small)
that there should be an ever-ready supply of money available to give out as the Spirit directs either regularly or occasionally.

--on the first day of the week.
(4) Giving should be periodic. It has already been suggested that this is not an erratic business. The laying by in private store should be done on Sunday. Sunday is the God-appointed day to keeping accounts, determining proportionate giving, and laying ~~that proper amount by~~ *by in store*. The Scriptures do not say much about what the Christian should or should not do on the Lord's Day except that he should assemble with other believers and do his giving (1 Cor. 16:2). Though one need not become legalistic about this matter of ~~straightening up~~ *carving for* one's financial matters on Sunday, one must ~~not be light about it~~ *treat it* either.

Here is a God-given exhortation which might well be heeded. The writer has himself made a practice in the past few years, whenever possible, of setting aside the proportion of his income which will go to the Lord's work, and strange as it may seem doing it on the Lord's day seems to bring ~~special~~ *an added* blessing.

One of my students tried this last year and testified to the blessing it brought his family, for gathered together as a family group on Sunday afternoon they ~~thought~~ *thanked* and prayed together about their giving to the Lord, *then spiritual this work strengthened.*

If God has suggested it, it is certainly worth trying.

But, someone may say, why go to all this trouble? Why not just tithe? The word tithè is found in the New Testament only 8 times (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12; Heb. 7:5,6,8,9). In the references in the Gospels it is used in connection with that which the Pharisees were doing in fulfilling their obligation to the Mosaic law. In the references in Hebrews it is used to show the ~~superiority~~ *inferiority* of the tribe of Levi to whom the tithe was given. There is no passage of Scripture that enjoins either by direct command or example the tithe upon the believer in this age. It is ~~very~~ *very* apparent that the tithe was part of the Mosaic law (Lev. 27:30-33) and an important factor in the economy of Israel. The law was never given to Gentiles and is expressly done away for the Christian (Rom. 2:14; ~~8:4~~; 2 Cor. 3:7-13; Heb. 7:11-12). Further, it would be impossible today to tithe as commanded in the Old Testament, for where is the priesthood to whom tithè could be paid? Neither are the words of Malachi 3 for the Christian, for

what believer claims to be a son of Jacob to whom the passage is addressed (v. 6)? Material blessing is never promised today as a reward for faithfulness in any area of living including giving. Spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3) and the meeting of material needs (Phil 4:19) is that which God promises. Being prospered materially is no sign of deep godliness or faithful tithing, and contrariwise poverty is no indication of being of God's will (cf. Paul's own case in Phil. 4:12).

But, it may ~~still~~ ^{could} be said, since tithing was practiced before the law, does that not ~~invalidate~~ make irrelevant all that has been said above and leave tithing as a proper principle of giving? Since Abraham and Jacob both tithed ~~does that not~~, and since their acts antedated the law, does that not relieve tithing of its legal aspects and make it a valid principle to follow today? The answer would be yes if there were no other guides for giving in the New Testament. Since there are such standards in the New Testament why go back to two isolated ^{in the Old Testament} examples to find the principles for giving? The fact that something was done before the law which was ^{later} also incorporated into the law does not make that thing a good example for today especially if the New Testament ^{gives guidance} speaks on the matter. Not even the most ardent tither would say that the Sabbath should be ^{observed} practiced today, and yet the Sabbath was ~~observed before it was incorporated into the law (Ex. 16:23-36)~~, and yet that is the very reason advanced for tithing. The New Testament teaches us about a new day of worship, and it also ^{gives} teaches us new directions for giving. To tithe today on the basis of the examples of these who did it before the law would mean that only 10% of one's income would go to the Lord and possibly only ^{occasionally} on occasion (as in the example of Abraham); to tithe on the basis of the law would mean that 22% would be given to the Lord as payment of a debt due Him and it should also mean that it ~~would~~ be given to support Judah; to give on the basis of the principles of the New Testament might mean any percent, but ^{100% already} it will mean given because ~~it~~ belongs to Him. ^{Lord's work} The Church will never lack support if it preaches and practices New Testament principles of giving.

Proportionate giving is not starting with a tithe and then doing what more we can when we can. Proportionate giving is as God hath prospered. If ^{Someone} I felt that after prayer that ^{his} my proportion should be around 10%, ^{The writer} I would ^{suggest that he} determine ~~before the Lord~~ to give 9% or 11% just to keep ^{his thought} ~~my mind~~ out of the 10% rut. A man who is giving 9% or 11% will find ~~it much easier to~~ give himself much more sensitive to the "ord's changing his proportion than the Christian who gives 10%.

This is ~~an~~ no way a doctrine of lawlessness. Though we are ~~not~~ under the law we are in-lawed to Christ, and this assures proper conduct in all areas of conduct including that of giving. When I say, as I do, "I do not tithe", I am not saying "I do not give." Every Christian owes 100% of what he is and what he has ~~and what he hopes to be and to have~~ to God, and I ~~for one~~ have willingly given all to Him. The question then is not only how much do I give to Him but also how ~~much~~ do I spend on myself. Proportionate giving alone can furnish the right answer to this problem. This important subject involves basic principles, motives, and resultant actions. We give because He gave, not because He commanded; we give because we want to, not because we have to; if in turn He blesses materially, we praise Him; if not, we still praise Him. This is grace giving.