



Playing with Percentages

The World's Approach (ILLUSTRATION 3E, left section)

- 1 These days, many people are bombarded with requests to give of their time, talents, and treasure (*three T's*) to help countless worthwhile causes. How much should we *give* of our *three T's*?
- 2 Sylvester assumes that those *three T's* are all his, and that he must decide what percentage he will *give* to God of what is his, of what God has *given* him. No doubt, he assumes that after he has *given* his "fair share" to God, the rest is his to use as he pleases.

Jesus' Approach (ILLUSTRATION 3E, right section))

- 1 We own nothing. God made and continues to own everything, including "our" bodies, Exodus 19:5; Haggai 2:8; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Psalm 100; Deuteronomy 8.
- 2 Sylvester must change his question to, *How much of what belongs to God do I truly need to keep and use for my own needs?*
- 3 We do not own God's creation; we merely manage it. Hence, Christians should not speak of Christian *giving*, but of Christian *management* and Christian *distribution*. This is the true definition of "stewardship."
- 4 The principle set forth above applies to all of life—not just to life in the organized church. The Kingdom of God embraces all of life; the traditional division of life into spiritual and secular realms is invalid.
- 5 When the Macedonian Christians were considering what to make available for the support of the needy in Jerusalem, "they gave *themselves* first to the Lord," 2 Corinthians 8:5. Only after people have done this are they in a condition to grapple with what the Bible has to say about the use of the material order.



The Appropriate Offering

ILLUSTRATION 3F

- 1 The Old Testament prophets repeatedly attacked the Israelites for thinking that they could keep God happy if they covered up their shallow obedience by offering God an abundance of animals in sacrifice (**priests, lamb, flames**), Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6–8. During His ministry, Jesus attacked those who adopted a similar attitude, Matthew 9:13.
- 2 Paul reminds Christians what their lifelong sacrifice must be:
I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Romans 12:1
- 3 Jesus sacrificed Himself for us, even unto death on a cross. Jesus summons us to offer our *bodies as a living sacrifice*, not to the **flames**, but to Him through the service of others (**servant figure**). Jesus wants us to do this, not just for an hour or so on a Sunday morning, but throughout life.
- 4 Paul writes:
Christ died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and was raised for them. 2 Corinthians 5:15

Questions to Ponder



Unit 3

- 1** A Chinese proverb states:
When a butterfly flaps its wings in China, it affects the weather patterns around Planet Earth.
What does the proverb mean, and what implications does it have for understanding the community nature of Christian discipleship?

- 2** Which of the following three statements is biblically appropriate, and why?
- “I am to serve others as they want me to serve them.”
 - “I am to serve others as I feel disposed to serve them.”
 - “I am to serve others as God wants me to serve them.”

- 3** *There are many worthy causes to which people should contribute. However, it is important that they give first to God’s work, to the work of the Church.*
Evaluate this statement.

- 4** Note point 4 on page 35, and read 1 Timothy 6: 6–10 carefully.
- How seriously does society take this passage today?

- What price does society pay for ignoring it?

- 5** It sometimes happens that a church body numbering perhaps 3,000,000 members makes a special effort to raise funds for World Relief. The result: \$3,000,000, or \$1 per member.
- How much do you (and your family) spend each month on eating out? How much do you give each month to help work among the truly needy around Planet Earth?

- What does the comparison reveal about your commitment to local, national, and international social justice?

- 6** When John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, first became a Christian, his salary was 30 pounds per year. He lived on 28 and made two available to the church. When his salary was increased to 50, he lived on 28 and made 22 available to the church. When it increased to 100, he lived on 28 and made 72 available to the church.

If Wesley’s example were followed today, what major (but exciting) problem would face God’s people?
