

Percentage Giving as Spiritual Practice Continued....

I wasn't motivated by this appeal. First, I didn't need a chart to spell out percentages of my income. I could figure that out myself. Second, I had no idea what "percentage" I'd already given. My giving was random. Finally, even though I sensed a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ, I couldn't (or wouldn't) connect my financial giving to my spiritual journey.

It wasn't until I was blessed to grow in love of God through experiences as a Sunday school teacher, a counselor at Lake Louise Junior High Camp and on Emmaus Walks that I began to think of trusting all parts of my life to the One who saves. That trust would eventually lead me to a new vocation and a liberating understanding of giving.

I was grateful for the sustaining presence of God and committed to making sure others experienced the same. In gratitude, I decided to connect my financial practices to my faith. I let go of worry about "giving away too much" and trusted God with my money, as I did with the rest of my life.

I honestly examined my giving/income ratio and asked, "Does this reflect my faith journey, my thankful spirit and my trust in the future God has in store for me?" And then, surprisingly, I decided to take deliberate steps to up my generosity practices through "percentage giving". The local church did not set my goals; I did. For the next few years, I adjusted my financial commitment to increase my giving, one step at a time.

Through the years, and even today, I continue to make a financial commitment to the church that, by God's grace, reflects my joy in Christ. My giving is not about meeting the church's financial goals. It is about my relationship with God. And through trusting in this relationship, I am set free.

Would you or your church like to know more about shifting perspectives from the duty of giving to the joy of faithful generosity? Contact me, Sherry Parker-Lewis, Sr. Director of Church Relations for UM Foundation of Michigan at sherry@umfmichigan.org.