Biblical Perspective on Giving – Giving Cheerfully and Sacrificially

Kerby Anderson provides a balanced, biblical perspective on how we should approach giving as Christians. One key point stressed from the book of 1st Corinthians is that God loves a cheerful giver and He honors those who give beyond their perceived ability. Read this article with an open heart asking God for His guidance on your giving habits.

The Controversy

In this article we are going to be talking about a biblical perspective on giving. In the past, we have discussed biblical principles concerning spending and focused primarily on the subject of debt and credit.{1} Here we will discuss such issues as the Old Testament tithe, New Testament giving, and related questions that often surface in the minds of Christians.

At the outset, we should acknowledge that there is some controversy surrounding a biblical perspective of giving. For example, if you ask if a Christian should tithe, you will get very different answers from various members in the body of Christ.

In fact, asking the question in some churches today is likely to start an argument. A few months ago, *The Wall Street Journal* ran an article entitled The Backlash Against Tithing.{2} More recently CBS News ran a feature, To Tithe or Not To Tithe?{3} Even the secular media is noticing how controversial tithing has become in some churches.

The idea that Christians should give ten percent of their income to the church has become quite controversial and is

increasingly being challenged. Church members say they should be free to donate whatever they choose. Some are reacting against a strong promotion of church giving that includes sermons, flyers, and brochures. Some balk at churches that have set up giving kiosks where church members can give using their debit cards. They have called them Gods ATM machines.

Others are reacting to the legalism that says the Old Testament law code concerning the tithe applies to the New Testament church age. And still others want to be good stewards of their giving and want to know more about how a church spends its money.

The best estimates are that Christians give about two and one-half percent of their income to the church, far below the ten percent advocated by those teaching tithing. And it appears that church giving is on the decline partially due to a decline in regular attendance and also due to the fact the Christians are giving to other charitable organizations. They balk at the idea that the church is Gods storehouse and want to give to other mission agencies and Christian organizations.

It isnt that Christians are stingy. Last year Americans gave an estimated $97 billion to churches, and that is almost a third of the countrys $295 billion in charitable donations.{4}

A number of church leaders and theologians have also entered the debate. They point out that the tithe was an Old Testament requirement, and that New Testament believers no longer live under the Law but under grace.

So in this article we look at the relationship between tithing and charitable giving while looking at the idea of giving in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament Tithe

How are the tithe and charitable giving related? In order to

answer that question we need to understand the relationship between the Old Testament tithe and New Testament giving. Lets begin with the teaching about the tithe. The Old Testament principle of the tithe provides the foundation for New Testament giving.

The word tithe means a tenth part. Once you understand that, you realize that many people use the phrase tithe, but arent really accurate in using it. Someone who makes $3000 a month and gives only $100 a month is not tithing. One study found that only three percent of households tithe their income to their church.{5}

The principle of the tithe can be found in Leviticus 27:30 which says, A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. We can derive three principles from this passage. First, the tithe was applied to everything from the land and did not just apply to some income or wealth. Second, the tithe belongs to the Lord and not to the people. And, third the tithe is holy, that is, it is set apart and should be given to the Lord.

What if a believer in the Old Testament did not tithe? The answer to that question can be found in Malachi 3:8-10. It says,

> *Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, How have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.*

If the nation of Israel refused to pay the tithe, then they were considered guilty of robbing God. The Israelites were to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, not just part of

the tithe.

In the Old Testament, the tithe was not voluntary but mandatory. Two kinds of giving are taught in the Bible: giving to the government (compulsory) and giving to God (voluntary). Israel was not only a spiritual community but a nation. The tithe was necessary to fund the nation. That is why many have referred to the tithe as a precursor to taxes. Israel was a theocracy, and the priests were the leaders of the government. They were supported by the tithe.

There were actually three tithes. One tithe was for the priests and Levites: A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30). This was paid to the Levites, who in turn gave a tenth of that to the priests (Number 18:26). This would be similar to the New Testament giving that goes toward ministry.

The second tithe provided funds for the Jewish festival (Deuteronomy 12:17-18). And a third tithe was to provide support for the widow, orphans, and poor (Deuteronomy 14:26-28). The first two were regularly collected, while the last one was collected every third year. Thus, the total amount of tithe was approximately twenty-three percent each year.

The tithe in the Old Testament was to be given from the first fruits. Proverbs 3:9 says, Honor the Lord from your wealth / And from the first of all your produce. The tithe was to be the first and the best of the crop, not an afterthought.

The first fruits applied to the vineyard (Leviticus 19:23-25) as well as to the production of grain and fruit trees (Exodus 23:16). It also applied to any coarse meal (Numbers 15:20-21) and other produce (2 Chronicles 31:5).

New Testament Giving

Does the New Testament teach the tithe?

Actually, nowhere in the New Testament is there an explicit command to tithe. The primary reason is that the tithe was for the Levites and the priests. The substitutionary death of Christ for our sins did away with the need for a temple. Christians dont need the temple and dont need priests as intercessors. We are all priests now and no longer live under law but under grace (Romans 6:15).

New Testament believers are never commanded to tithe. They are instructed to pay their taxes (Romans 13:1-7). That is the only *required* giving in the church age.

Christians are instructed to give to those who minister (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 2:10). We are to give to those who trust God to supply their needs (Philippians 4:19). We are to give as God has prospered us (1 Corinthians 16:2), and are to give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). And the Bible teaches that we will ultimately give account of our stewardship (Romans 14:12).

We might note that the first century believers set a high standard for giving. They sold their goods and gave money to any believer in need (Acts 2:45). They sold their property and gave the entire amount to the work of the apostles (Acts 4:36-5:2). And they also gave generously to the ministry of Paul (2 Corinthians 8:1-5) on a continual basis (Philippians 4:16-18).

Even though the tithe was no longer required, it appears that the early believers used the tithe as a base line for their giving. After all, a large majority of the first century believers were Jewish, and so they gave not only the tithe but above and beyond the requisite ten percent.

Paul makes it clear that Christians are not to give grudgingly

or under compulsion but as each believer has purposed in his heart (2 Corinthians 9:7). So the tithe was no longer the mandatory requirement, but it appeared to provide a basis for voluntary giving by believers.

Some have noted the similarity between the free will giving in the Old Testament and New Testament giving. One example would be when Moses challenged the people of Israel to give to the tabernacle. They were so enthusiastic, that the people were restrained from bringing any more. For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough (Exodus 36:6-7).

Another example of this would be the free will offerings collected when the temple was rebuilt. We read in the Old Testament book of Ezra that the people were encouraged to give a free will offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:6). So you can see that the concept of voluntary giving did not begin in the New Testament. There are a few examples of it in the Old Testament.

Biblical Principles on Giving (part one)

Given that Christians are commanded to give, the real question we need to answer is how they should give. Not all Christians give the same amount, and sadly many Christians do not give anything to their church or to Christian organizations. So lets look at a few key principles that should guide our giving.

The first principle is that when you sow generously, you will reap generously. 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Elsewhere in Scripture, we read that the size of a harvest corresponds to what we scatter. Proverbs 11:24-25 says,

> *There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more,*
> *And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it*

results only in want.
The generous man will be prosperous,
And he who waters will himself be watered.

Of course a spiritual harvest may different from the kind of seed that is sown. For example, a material seed (giving to ministry) may reap a spiritual harvest (1 Corinthians 9:9).

God has both blessed us materially (Acts 14:17) and spiritually (Roman 5:17). So we can be assured that God will increase our harvest. Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness (2 Corinthians 9:10).

A second principle is that we are to give according to what we have purposed in our hearts. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Your giving should be a deliberate act and not just a quick response to some emotional appeal. Certainly there is nothing wrong with giving a freewill offering because God has moved you to support a particular missionary or project. But we should also have a purpose and a plan to our giving.

Many Christians have begun to give through an automatic deduction from their checking account. This has the positive effect to providing regular support for the church or Christian organizations. The monthly amount is deducted whether you are actively thinking about the ministry or not. The possible negative effect is that it could become so automatic, that you might forget about the ministry and fail to pray for it.

A third principle is that we are to give voluntarily. We are told in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that we are not to give under guilt or compulsion. That admonition does not mean that we are only to support the local church or Christian organizations when we

feel like it. In this particular passage, Paul was challenging believers in Corinth to give to a special need (the financial needs of the believers in Jerusalem). This was a one-time special offering that was above and beyond providing for the regular needs of the church in Corinth.

Biblical Principles on Giving (part two)

Another principle taught in Scripture is that we are to give generously. Notice that in 2 Corinthians 9:7 it says that God loves a cheerful giver. God values not the size of the gift (Acts 11:29; 1 Corinthians 16:2) but the heart of the giver (not reluctantly or grudgingly) and the willingness of the giver (a cheerful giver).

We see that principle played out in the Old Testament. When the temple needed to be rebuilt, Joash put an offering box out for those who would give to this important work. 2 Chronicles 24:10 says, All the officials and all the people brought their contributions gladly, dropping them into the chest until it was full. Notice that it says they gave to the rebuilding of the temple gladly. They were glad to give and provided a model for what Paul calls a cheerful giver.

We are also to give sacrificially. As Paul was writing to the church in Corinth, he told them of the sacrificial giving of the Macedonian Christians. He said, . . .in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord (2 Corinthians 8:2-3).

Consider that on the one hand Paul is talking about their deep poverty but then goes on to say that they still gave beyond their ability. I dont know too many people who today are giving beyond their ability. I know quite a few people who are giving less than their ability. Over my years in ministry, I

have had many people tell me that they cannot afford to tithe. In this passage, Paul challenges the believers in Corinth (and by extension challenges us) to reevaluate our priorities and give sacrificially.

Once again we can see this principle at work in the Old Testament as well. David balked at giving a sacrifice to the Lord that was not really a sacrifice for him to give. In 2 Samuel 24:24 David says, I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing. David is reminding us by his behavior that true sacrificial giving means being willing to sacrifice that which we would be inclined to keep for ourselves.

I trust this biblical perspective on giving has been helpful to you. It has been challenging for me to research and write, and I hope it challenges you to reconsider what you are giving to the church and Christian ministries. May we all be found faithful in our giving to the Lord.

Notes

1. Kerby Anderson, Debt and Credit, Probe, 2008, www.probe.org/debt-and-credit/
2. Suzanne Sataline, The Backlash Against Tithing, *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 November 2007.
3. Martha Teichner, To Tithe Or Not To Tithe? CBS News, 2 March 2008, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/03/01/ sunday/.
4. Giving USA Foundation, www.givingusa.org/.
5. George Barna, Tithing Down 62% in the Past Year, *Barna Update*, 19 May 2003,www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=139.

© 2008 Probe Ministries

Fertility and Voting Patterns

November 1, 2007

Does fertility affect voting patterns? Apparently it does much more than we realize. And this has been a topic of discussion for both liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans.

Arthur Brooks wrote a significant op-ed on the "Fertility Gap" last year in the *Wall Street Journal*. He said: "Simply put, liberals have a big baby problem: They're not having enough of them . . . and their pool of potential new voters is suffering as a result."

He noted that "if you picked 100 unrelated politically liberal adults at random, you would find that they had, between them, 147 children. If you picked 100 conservatives, you would find 208 kids." That is a "fertility gap" of 41 percent.

We know that about 80 percent of people with an identifiable party preference grow up to vote essentially the same way as their parents. This "fertility gap" translates into lots more little Republicans than little Democrats who will vote in future elections.

So what could this mean for future presidential elections? Consider the key swing state of Ohio which is currently split 50-50 between left and right. If current patterns continue, Brooks estimates that Ohio will swing to the right and by 2012 will be 54 percent to 46 percent. By 2020, it will be solidly conservative by a margin of 59 percent to 41 percent.

Now look at the state of California that tilts in favor of liberals by 55 percent to 45 percent. By the year 2020, it will be swing conservative by a percentage of 54 percent to 46 percent. The reason is due to the "fertility gap."

Of course most people vote for politicians, personalities, and issues not parties. But the general trend of the "fertility gap" cannot be ignored especially if Democrats continue to appeal to liberals and Republicans to conservatives.

©2007 Probe Ministries

Biblical Principles

October 11, 2007

How should a Christian evaluate social and political issues? Here are a few biblical principles that can be used. First is the sanctity of human life. Verses such as Psalm 139:13-16 show that God's care and concern extend to the womb. Other verses such as Jeremiah 1:5, Judges 13:7-8, Psalm 51:5 and Exodus 21:22-25 give additional perspective and framework to this principle that applies to many areas of bioethics.

A related biblical principle involves the equality of human beings. The Bible teaches that God has made "of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:26). The Bible also teaches that it is wrong for a Christian to have feelings of superiority (Philippians 2). Believers are told not to make class distinctions between various people (James 2). Paul teaches the spiritual equality of all people in Christ (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). These principles apply to racial relations and our view of government.

A third principle is a biblical perspective on marriage. Marriage is God's plan and provides intimate companionship for life (Genesis 2:18). Marriage provides a context for the procreation and nurture of children (Ephesians 6:1-2). And finally, marriage provides a godly outlet for sexual desire (1

Corinthians 7:2). These principles can be applied to such diverse issues as artificial reproduction (which often introduces a third party into the pregnancy) and cohabitation (living together).

A final principle concerns government and our obedience to civil authority. Government is ordained by God (Rom.13:1-7). We are to render service and obedience to the government (Matt. 22:21) and submit to civil authority (1 Pet. 2:13-17). Even though we are to obey government, there may be certain times when we might be forced to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). These principles apply to issues such as war, civil disobedience, politics, and government.

Every day, it seems, we are confronted with ethical choices and moral complexity. As Christians it is important to consider these biblical principles and consistently apply them to these issues.

©2007 Probe Ministries

Voter ID and the Supreme Court

January 21, 2008

In an earlier commentary I talked about the importance of a voter ID. That case out of Indiana has gone before the Supreme Court, and we will hear their verdict in the next few months.

Although the case shouldn't be that controversial, it centers on the requirement in Indiana that voters show photo identification when they cast their ballot. Given the simple fact that we have to show photo IDs for so many routine

actions, you wouldn’t think that requirement would be that controversial.

Opponents argue that this imposes an unconstitutional burden on voters. Yet the law allows those few citizens without a driver’s license (estimated to be around one percent) to obtain a free, state-sponsored picture ID. And even if someone arrives at the polling place unprepared, they are given a provisional ballot that they can validate later.

Opponents also argue that this law will disenfranchise low-income voters, minorities, or seniors. Yet a statistical analysis by the Heritage Foundation demonstrated that voter ID laws in other states do not depress voter turnout. It does however limit the number of dogs, cats, or deceased people who try to vote in an election.

One critic suggested that this voter ID law would move us closer to a national ID. But if you are concerned about that, you might want to have the government rethink the use of a photo ID in so many other areas of life. After all, most people vote once every two years or once every four years. But they are required to show a photo ID every time they board a plane or every time they cash a check.

How the Supreme Court rules on this case will not only affect Indiana, but may have an impact on 24 other states that have various kinds of laws on the books to prevent voter fraud. Former president Jimmy Carter pointed out that the United States is merely attempting to do what most countries already do. He said: “Voters in nearly 100 democracies use a photo identification card without fear of infringement on their rights.”

Let’s hope the Supreme Court takes that into account.

©2008 Probe Ministries

Voter ID

January 8, 2008

While we find ourselves in the midst of the election season, there is an issue in the background that will have a profound impact on future elections. It is simply the question of whether election officials can ask you for a photo ID before you vote.

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a case out of Indiana that required potential voters to present a photo ID in order to prove their identity before they can vote. One would think this would hardly be a contentious issue. You need to provide an ID to cash a check. You need an ID to board an airplane or rent a car. In fact, often you need to provide an ID with your credit card. So you would think that requiring an ID before you vote in an election would not be contentious.

If you thought that, you would be wrong. Columnist Cal Thomas quotes from a recent *Washington Post* article in which an election-law expert at Loyola Law School said that the court's decision will decide "whether protecting the integrity of the voting process from fraud is of equal or greater value than making sure as many eligible voters as possible take part in the process."

In other words we may have to allow voter fraud in order to assure that as many people as possible can vote. While that sounds noble, you have to remember that we are already facing major problems with voter fraud. Four years ago, John Fund with the *Wall Street Journal* wrote the important book, *Stealing Elections.* Just in the last four years, we have had enough new examples that he could publish a volume two to that book.

Try getting on an airplane without a photo ID. Try checking a check without a photo ID. In fact, call your credit card company and then refuse to answer the questions they ask to confirm your identity. I would like to see how far you get. But go into a polling place and you can probably pick up a ballot with very few questions asked.

We will see how the Supreme Court rules in this case. I trust they will protect the integrity of the voting process.

©2008 Probe Ministries

Throw Out the Maps

March 13, 2008

Michael Barone says it is time to throw out the old electoral maps, and he should know. Many people have called him the most knowledgeable person in U.S. politics. He is the co-author of the *Almanac of American Politics*. He has been watching the electoral scene for decades and sees some significant shifts.

The old map with red states and blue states served us well for the last two presidential elections, but there is good evidence that it is now out-of-date. In 2000 and 2004, the Republicans nominated the same man, and the Democrats nominated men with similar views and backgrounds. All of that has changed in 2008.

This time the Republicans will probably nominate John McCain, and the Democrats will probably nominate Barack Obama. There is always the possibility of a change between now and the convention, but that is unlikely. If these two men are the nominees, it changes everything.

It is clear that some of the states that went Democratic in 2004 are available to John McCain. And it is also clear that some of the states that went Republican that same year are possibilities for Barack Obama. And let's not forget the surge of new voters coming into the electoral process that are potentially available to either candidate.

The potential changes in the electorate shouldn't surprise us. Twenty years ago it seemed like Republicans had a lock on the presidency while the Democrats had a lock on the House of Representatives. At the time it seemed reasonable since Republicans had won five of the last six presidential elections, and Democrats had held the House for thirty-six years. But in 1992, Bill Clinton was elected president. Two years later, the Republicans won the House. Electoral trends change, sometimes quickly.

It looks to me that it is time to throw out the maps, and it may be time for the candidates to rethink their strategy and not write off states lost by their party's nominee four or eight years ago. It's a new day.

©2008 Probe Ministries

Superdelegates

February 27, 2008

In a previous commentary I talked about how the current Democratic Party rules made it possible for Barack Obama to do so well in the primaries. There are another set of rules that might cause him to lose at the Democratic Convention.

Back in 1982, the Democratic Party created a special role for party leaders. They were designated as superdelegates and were

created to prevent the party from nominating an unelectable candidate like George McGovern. At first, they provided a necessary boost to a candidate already headed for the nomination. This boost helped push Walter Mondale over Gary Hart in 1984. And the superdelegates helped confirm Michael Dukakis as the Democratic nominee in 1988.

But this year's Democratic race is so close that the superdelegates may decide the outcome. There are nearly 800 superdelegates, and that represents 19 percent of all the delegates. In the past, these superdelegates were able to bring closure to the nominating process. This time they could decide who the Democratic nominee might be, and that would most likely be the establishment candidate Hillary Clinton.

If they become the king-makers, it is easy to see that there will be lots of anger and frustration. This primary season has already begun to show the fault lines of race, gender, and generation. The animosity between the Clinton and Obama campaigns is well known. If the Democratic establishment decides the winner through the superdelegates, you have to wonder if the 2008 Denver Democratic Convention might start to look like the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention.

Like the rules I talked about earlier, no one saw this coming. The Democratic Party rules for delegates has helped Barack Obama in the primaries. If the delegate count is close then it is possible that the Democratic Party rules for superdelegates could help Hillary Clinton. At the moment, Barack Obama is building a lead so this concern may evaporate. But the party may still reconsider the rules they enacted years ago.

©2008 Probe Ministries

Presidential Experience

March 4, 2008

As once again citizens in four states go to the polls today, it has been interesting to see how the presidential campaign has unfolded. While many political pundits have made note of the number of times the words “change” and “hope” have been used in the campaign, I would like to highlight another word. That word is “experience.”

On the Republican side, John McCain talked about his experience in Washington while Mitt Romney talked about his experience running a business. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton has made a big issue of her years of experience compared to Barack Obama. My feeling is that experience is important, but character and values are even more important. Obviously, you don’t want someone in the Oval Office who doesn’t know his or her way around Washington. At the same time, the American people haven’t exactly felt that experience is always a major prerequisite to the office.

In the last few decades, American voters have often put the less experienced candidate in office. President Gerald Ford was certainly more experienced than Governor Jimmy Carter. And after four years as president, Jimmy Carter was more experienced than former governor Ronald Reagan. But the American people put the less experienced candidate in office.

In 1992, you could certainly say that George H.W. Bush was experienced. He had served eight years as vice-president and four years as president. Before that he had been ambassador to China and the head of the CIA. But in spite of all of that experience, the voters elected Governor Bill Clinton.

Sometimes experience is all that it’s supposed to be. One president came into office with tremendous experience. He served ten years in the House of Representatives, was minister

to Russia, then served ten years in the Senate, and four years as Secretary of State. James Buchanan was elected in 1856 but served only one term because he became one of America's worst presidents. In 1860, he was defeated by an inexperienced one-term congressman by the name of Abraham Lincoln.

©2008 Probe Ministries

Dismantling the Electoral College

January 28, 2008

New Jersey recently became the second state to enter a compact that would effectively eliminate the power of the Electoral College to select a president. In December, the New Jersey legislature approved a measure that would deliver the state's 15 electoral votes for president to the winner of the national popular vote. Two weeks ago, Governor Corzine signed the bill which has now become law.

Maryland (with 10 electoral votes) is the only other state to pass the compact into law, but others have considered it. Governors in California and Hawaii vetoed bills to join the compact. The Colorado Senate approved the proposal, but a House committee rejected it.

Sponsors of these measures argue that the compact would ensure that all states are competitive in presidential elections and would make all votes important. A spokesman for the governor said that New Jersey "has long been on the sidelines of presidential races and this measure would help put the Garden State back into competition during a presidential campaign."

But consider that this bill now may require electors from New Jersey to vote against their constituents. So who are they representing? Certainly they are not representing the voters of their state.

Because of third parties, our last four presidential elections haven't had any candidate with a popular vote majority. The Electoral College gives them that majority. It might be worth remembering that Abraham Lincoln won less than 40 percent of the popular vote and relied on the Electoral College majority for his authority.

And with problems of election fraud, we narrow the number of states where a recount can take place. Consider the 2000 Florida recount and multiply that by 50 and you can see the problem.

Even if you are convinced that the Electoral College is a bad idea, you should go about amending the Constitution. But what is happening is a surreptitious way for some states to do so without constitutional support.

©2008 Probe Ministries

Democratic Delegate Count

February 26, 2008

For weeks commentators have been talking about the close delegate count between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. But anyone looking at the Democratic Party's rules for delegates probably would have predicted such a situation. In fact you could say that Barack Obama's sizable delegate count is due to a decision forced on the party 20 years ago by Jesse Jackson.

Columnist Ruth Marcus writes: “The stage was set for the current stalemate over five marathon days of negotiations in June 1988. In the fifth-floor conference room of a Washington law firm, representatives of Michael Dukakis, the party’s nominee, and Jesse Jackson, his unsuccessful challenger, hashed out a new set of delegate selection rules.” Jackson was upset that he did not have as many delegates as his popular vote would have indicated.

Jesse Jackson’s assistant was Harold M. Ickes. He argued for “proportional representation rules that would award insurgent candidates a bigger share of delegates in future contests.” Twenty years later, the rules Ickes proposed have been working against his friend, Hillary Clinton. She has won delegate-rich states like New York, New Jersey, and California. But Barack Obama has managed to stay close in those contests and pick up delegates in other contests to take the lead.

The Democratic rules give lots of weight to the losing candidate. Under the rules, three-fourths of the pledged delegates are allocated by congressional district, the remaining one-quarter according to the vote statewide. In California Hillary Clinton won 43 of the state’s 53 congressional districts but only received 207 delegates to Obama’s 163. If the Democrats used the Republican rules, Hillary Clinton would have received 316 delegates. Barack Obama would have received just 54.

It is quite possible that both parties will revisit their delegate rules in the next few years. The Democrats’ rules hurt Hillary Clinton and the Republicans’ rules helped John McCain. Now that we have seen the results, it’s time for the parties to reconsider their rules.

©2008 Probe Ministries