

Something to Pray About

December 2013 – Cindy Sears

Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. —Luke 6:38 NKJV

Half and Half

Let's not berate the gift buying or eating at Christmas time too much. After all, all this "materialism" helps to fuel our economy—giving people jobs that provide them with incomes, with which they support their families, pay taxes that keep the government running (which helps us live in relative peace and security), and give charity to others, here and abroad, to those who cannot support themselves. And some people also use part of their incomes to support churches that are preaching and teaching the gospel message around the world.



Still, I think that we can admit that most of us have acquired way too many things. Why else is there a booming business in rental storage units? Why else are so many books written on the subject of how to de-clutter your life? And why are so many people in financial trouble because of credit card and other debt? And the eating gets out of hand, too. If you're like me, you are carrying around extra weight in all the wrong places. So, I don't need another humongous meal with 11 courses and 5 choices of dessert that I can't decide between; so, I end up eating a little (or a lot) of all of them!

We have it very good here. I would dare to say that most of the people you and I know get Christmas all year round now. In other words, we no longer have to wait until Christmas to get new toys, school clothes, jewelry, candy, and on and on. We constantly buy these things and more all year long. This makes it very hard for anyone to give a really great gift to anyone. More than likely, the recipient of your gift has already purchased whatever he or she needed and most of what they wanted. That's why the retail stores do a booming business after Christmas on returns and exchanges.

Here's a suggestion: figure up what you spent on Christmas last year. Divide the total by two. Spend half as much on you and your family, and give the other half to the church, a charity, or directly to someone in need. But don't go into debt for any of the above. Instead, use the money you would have spent on finance charges to pay down the debts you already owe. Or set aside the money in savings for a rainy day or something you want to buy later—when you can pay cash in full for the product. Or give more money to the church or a valid charity. Or how about doing all three of the above?

Some good charities include: Angel Tree gifts (buying gifts for children who otherwise wouldn't receive anything at Christmas—Prison Fellowship, Salvation Army, and local churches/groups sponsor these), Operation Christmas Child (Samaritan's Purse); UMCOR Funds (UMC relief funds for helping people in disaster areas—100% of your donation goes to that specific relief effort). And through Samaritan's Purse, you can also buy farm animals for people in poverty-stricken areas to help them support their families or help pay for a cleft lip operation for a child and many more special gifts. See their website for more information. You could also sponsor a man at Bethel Colony of Mercy in Lenoir, a rehab facility for men dealing with drug and alcohol addictions. Also, you can work through our own women's, men's, and Sunday school class groups who give gifts, money, and effort to help people locally. The list is truly endless once you begin to look.

Don't hoard things. Get rid of your old, no longer needed items quickly and easily by donating them

to a charity, such as the Salvation Army Store, Habitat for Humanity's Restore, Goodwill Industries, or South Caldwell Christian Ministries—and get a tax break, too!

God has truly blessed us in the United States. Isn't it time we passed the blessings on to others. God will not keep pouring blessings on us if we continually stop the flow. His blessings are meant to flow to us, then through us, to others. Earn all you can, save all you can, and GIVE ALL YOU CAN. "For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38b NKJV). Now that is true heart giving!

