

Something to Pray About

July 2012 – Cindy Sears

Give, and it will 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

Why Raise Our Hands?

Having been raised in a Baptist Church, there are things that the Methodists do that puzzle me or are awkward to me. One of these is the raising of our hands after the offering is taken on Sunday. It was several months before I could do it with any degree of comfort (though comfort is not a requirement of worship). I think I have finally figured out what is going on here, though.

In Malachi 3: 10 (NKJV), we read, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try 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 such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” When I lift up my hands after the taking of the offering, I am lifting them up to the Lord in 1) gratitude to him, 2) in praise and honor of him, and 3) so that I may receive his blessing.

Notice in the verse above that the prophet says “bring all the *tithes* into the storehouse...” The word *tithe* means 10 or 10th, referring to 10%. That is the amount the Lord has said that he expects his people to give to the kingdom’s work. Our God is a just and fair God, right? To be fair he must bless us according to our giving. Does the Lord bless me when I give less than 10% of my income to him? From my experience, I believe the answer is “yes.” Any amount you give is a sign of some degree of trust in the Lord. Does he bless a person who gives 10% more than one who only gives 5%? What would be just and fair? Be honest now. And the person who gives “offerings” (amounts above the 10% expected)? Can that person expect even greater blessings? What would be fair? (Please keep in mind that I am not talking about salvation here or working for it; I am talking about earthly or earthbound blessings only.)

It has often been said that a closed fist can receive no gift. So, we raise open hands to the Lord to receive his gifts. Yet, how many of us have raised open hands in church, but clenched our money in our fists instead of giving it in trust to the Lord’s work?

The real question in giving the tithe centers around this: how much do you *really* trust the Lord? He has promised to give you all that you need. (See Matthew 6:25-34) Your giving reflects your true belief or faith in that promise.

The Lord asks us to give 10%. That is way less than the government requires from us in income taxes, sales taxes, property taxes, and transportation taxes (gasoline surtax, licenses, etc.). I went through a long period of unemployment and then underemployment. I survive by holding down two part-time, no benefits jobs. When I sit down and figure up a “reasonable” budget, there is no earthly way that I should be surviving financially—but I do—and I tithe on all my gross earnings. I did not tithe when I first returned to church; but, as my trust in God’s provisioning has grown, I have given more. Often, I have given when I wasn’t very confident that God would provide. I believe that is called “stepping out in faith.” And I have been blessed financially, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. I have all that I need; I have much more than I deserve; and I have an abundance of joy in a very full and fulfilling life in Christ. Now, when I lift my hands to the Lord, I expect to be blessed and I know that, whatever my earthly circumstances, I am blessed beyond measure. And God’s work is blessed through me.

I urge you to open your hands to give and to receive—you will not be disappointed when you give in trust to the Lord our God and Savior. After all, he was willing to give his ONLY SON that we might have eternal life (John 3:16). If he was willing and able to do that, can the Lord of the universe not also give you all else that you need to live? And the Lord's blessings will carry over into eternity also. (See Luke 6:35; 1 Corinthians 3:8, 14; Revelation 22:12)