

Are You Holding On ... or Letting Go?

It's time to check your posture: Are your hands in the air? True worship requires surrender.

Christians used to talk a lot about surrender. They called it the consecrated life, and they sang about it in hymns such as "I Surrender All," "Have Thine Own Way" or "Wherever He Leads, I'll Go." These songs fueled the missionary movements of the past.

Today? Not so much.

"My question to you: Are your hands open and raised to God? Or are you making a fist? Have you given back to the Lord what He has given you? Or are your hands tightly clenched?"

In many American churches, "altars" are a strange concept. They are referred to as "stages," and they are used only for fog machines or music performances. "Altar calls" no longer fit in the time constraints of our trendy 80-minute services. Meanwhile, talk of surrender has been replaced by messages about self-empowerment and self-motivation.

The Good Life has replaced The God Life. The Path to Prosperity has become more

popular than The
Calvary Road. We are more interested in getting a breakthrough
than brokenness.

Yet God is
calling us back to consecration. Genuine worship, according to
Romans 12:1,
involves a wholehearted abandonment of self. Paul wrote:
“Therefore I urge you,
by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and
holy sacrifice,
acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship”
(NASB).

When priests were
set apart for God’s service in the Old Covenant, they were
“consecrated” in a
solemn ceremony. The word for consecration in Exodus 28:41
means “to fill the
hand.” The word is a picture of an empty hand receiving God’s
blessings and
then giving them back to the Lord in unconditional surrender.

My question to you: Are your hands open and
raised to God? Or are you making a fist? Have you given back
to the Lord what
He has given you? Or are your hands tightly clenched? It might
be a good idea to
examine how you are holding every aspect of your life:

Your time. Does God have your life 24/7? Does He
have your weekends? Have you made room in your life to spend
time with Him? Or
has prayer been crowded out by your favorite TV shows, time
with friends or the
demands of work?

Your talents. Are you using your natural and spiritual

gifts to reach others for Christ? Or did you hide your talents, like the unwise steward in Jesus' parable? Have you assumed that, because others seemed more gifted, you should be a spectator while they serve?

Your money. The only way to know if you are truly surrendered to God's will is if your wallet is open. A lack of generosity toward God's work reveals a much deeper problem.

Your future. Are you driving your career plans—or have you allowed God to take the steering wheel? Ambition can take you a long way—but it must be yielded to His will or it will lead to tragedy. You must agree with what Jesus prayed at Gethsemane: "Not my will, but Yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

Your relationships. Do you allow friends, or romantic relationships, to lead you away from purity, integrity and spiritual faithfulness? The Bible says friendship with the world is hostility toward God (James 4:4). As painful as it may be, true surrender will involve cutting some ties.

Your sexuality. Many Christians believe they can be faithful believers while practicing immorality. Don't buy that lie. Living the consecrated life means repenting of all known sin daily—and fleeing from fornication, adultery, pornography and all forms of

lust.

Your children. While we have been commanded to raise our kids for God, we also must entrust them to His care. After all, they are really His children, not ours. Once you've done your part, give them back to Him.

This week my youngest daughter—our so-called “baby”—is graduating from high school and headed to college in Georgia. Meanwhile my third daughter is leaving this week to minister on a foreign mission field for two months—in a place where women are not exactly safe or respected. I've had to consciously put my girls on the altar whenever I've doubted that God will take care of them.

It's one thing to give your own life to Christ. It's another thing to surrender those you love to His will and purpose. It requires a whole new level of trust. But it is the path that Abraham, the father of our faith, was required to walk when he put his son Isaac on the altar.

True faith always involves gut-wrenching surrender. I urge you to take the right posture: Get your hands open, lift them up to heaven and say with all your heart: “Lord, I'm all yours.”

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