

Treasures in Heaven

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Introduction

This writing is intended for Christians who:

1. Are serving their Savior and Lord—in any capacity and via any means.
2. Understand (and know) the heart is deceitful. “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” Jeremiah 17:9
3. Desire His righteousness and have asked God:
 - a. To search their heart. “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” Psalm 139:23
 - b. To guide them in all aspects of their lives. “See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:24

The purpose of this writing is to reveal the intentions of our heart, the reasons why we serve, and those aspects of our daily walk that may be improved, so that:

1. We may more effectively glorify Him.
2. Our efforts (works) will endure testing during the Judgment Seat of Christ.

So, let’s start with a question...

Do you want others to love you, based upon their free will, unconditionally, and for who you are?

Take a few moments to think about your answer.

- Free will means they have made an autonomous decision to love you.
- Unconditional means their love is not based upon what you do or fail to do.
- For who you are means they look past all of your little “nuances” that can cause relationship issues and/or conflict. (None of us are perfect.)

The overwhelming majority of persons will answer with a resounding YES! Well, our desire to be loved unconditionally and for who we are was placed there by our Creator—as part of our design. God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27). The desire to be loved by free will, unconditionally and for who He is...is also within the heart of God. This is why He extends His grace and love (through His Son) so that we would respond with love to Him.

God loves us. It is His choice...for God is love (1 John 4:8). Because of Jesus, His love is unconditional—regardless of our sin—past, present and future.

“Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 3:7-10

In other words, “We love Him because He first loved us.” 1 John 4:19

When we look deeper into our design—which transcends the animal kingdom—our attributes facilitate our ability to love God. For example, we:

- **Communicate in various ways.** We can speak verbally, non-verbally, via sign language, via technology, in more than one language, and by prayer.
- **Analyze things based upon different viewpoints.** We are able to look at things from multiple angles—including identification of weighted benefits and costs.
- **Recognize right from wrong.** Interesting point...reflect upon your “right from wrong list” before and after you knew Jesus Christ.
- **Make free-will decisions.** We are self-directed individuals who make choices in life.
- **Experience wide range of emotions**—from anger to love, and everything in-between.
- **Respond with gratitude.** Let’s say someone recognizes you have a need, and fills your need without a request by you and without any expectation of reimbursement. Do you not have a desire to say thank you, with the hope of returning the favor in some way?
- **Reflect with remorse / guilt.** When looking in the past, we sometimes experience regret or guilt for what we failed to do, or did do.
- **Able to forgive.** Forgiveness is more powerful than we realize. It has the ability to break the chains that bind us to sin, and can open our heart to experience God’s love when we forgive others (and ourselves).
- **Express faith.** We have an ability to rely upon those whom we trust. But more important, placing our complete trust in God is foundational in pleasing Him—for He desires our trust. *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6*
- **Self-awareness and self-analysis:**
 - Self-awareness is the conscious knowledge of our character, feelings, motives, and desires.
 - Self-analysis is an effort to understand our motives and the reasons why we do what we do.

Learning Exercise: Review each of our design attributes above and determine the:

1. Direct and/or indirect influence on our ability to love God.
2. Detrimental impact on our ability to love God if we were not designed with the attribute.

Now consider the fact that each of us are uniquely designed. Not one person who has ever lived or will ever live—throughout all of time (past, present and future)—is like you. You are unique and one-of-a-kind...by design...God’s design. Our uniqueness includes our physical characteristics, our personalities and our talents.

Talents

Talent is defined as an aptitude or skill. All Christians have one or more talents—each can be used to glorify Jesus Christ. A talent may be comprised of praying, preaching, cooking, serving others, teaching, cleaning, singing, writing, playing an instrument, listening, helping, and so forth.

Within the spiritual realm, any activity performed for someone else—with the intent of glorifying Jesus Christ—has far more weight in God’s eyes than one who seeks adulation from the masses upon the conclusion of a music concert, stands in their own glory after winning a sporting event, or is motivated by self under the premise of being divinely inspired by God.

Consider how Jesus recognized the woman who gave only two mites (about a penny) as contributing far more than those who contributed much. (Mark 12:41-44) This truth is relevant for our tithes and offerings...and applicable to what we do with our talents.

It's not about how much we give.

It's not about what we give.

It's all about the desires and intent of our heart as we give.

For nothing we do for ourselves will remain...only what we do for Him.

The origin of the word "talent" is from the Parable of the Talents spoken by Jesus. In biblical times, a talent was a weighted amount of gold or silver (a value of money). It is estimated one biblical talent would be worth around \$1.4 million dollars today.

Jesus said... "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise, he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time, the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them."

"So, he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"

Note the reward for the increase of five and two talents received the same response and reward—which was based upon seeking an increase. However, the servant who received one talent hid the talent due to fear. As such, he did not receive recognition and a reward—but lost what was given him.

"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So, you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So, take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.'" Matthew 25:14-30

We are blessed when we use one of our talents to glorify our Savior. It is an indescribable experience when we witness the Holy Spirit using us to touch the heart and soul of someone. But what's more important to understand, we will be judged as to the intent of our hearts in using our God-given gifts. Our motives—which can range from glorifying self to glorifying Jesus—will be tested by fire.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5:10

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

The Judgment Seat of Christ is not for entrance into Heaven. Our “ticket” for entrance into Heaven was paid for by Jesus. However, we will be judged for our works:

- That which is done for self will not endure.
- That which is done for Jesus will be rewarded

Stated earlier, self-awareness and self-analysis is one of our design attributes. As such, it is important for each of us to “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.” 2 Corinthians 13:5

The comparative table below will assist in identifying motives of your heart as you exercise your talents. Please note that it is not intended to be a “hammer,” or a list of thou shall and shall nots. In addition, it is not intended to judge someone else—for no one has the right to judge another (only God). It is intended for you. It is intended to assist in your continued growth in righteousness, as you become less like yourself and more like Jesus.

The left side is comprised of motives and thoughts that are based upon self (wood, hay and straw). The right side are motives and thoughts that are based upon Jesus Christ (gold, silver and precious stones).

Self	Jesus Christ
Performed with varying degrees of pride	Driven by gratitude, humility and love for Jesus
It's about me	Accomplished with hope others see the glory of God
A mandate...it's expected of me	Done with willful joy
Frustrated when no one helps	You're good doing it alone (It's just You and me God!)
Seeks human recognition	Uncomfortable when someone gives you praise
Adds to your list of “good behavior”	Nothing can be added to what Jesus has done for me
It's not “big” or “important”	Contented in doing small things
Earning salvation	Living in grace
God needs me	Everything I have God gave to me
Desires control	Desires servitude
Imagine wearing crowns	Will place at the feet of Jesus

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:19-21

Treasures in Heaven

There are various perceptions of what Heaven will be like—including what the treasures may be. The picture below lists aspects of Heaven we will most likely experience.



Starting at the top and working clockwise, we will be in His presence. Imagine for a moment the experience of feeling His radiated holiness and perfect love as it passes through your spiritual body. We will be reunited with family and friends. We will worship together in a manner unlike any worship we have experienced on earth. We will receive recognition and crowns for that which was done for His glory. We will receive answers to questions that we have held in our mind under the folder called “Trust God, He will explain.” We will experience a degree of peace, joy and agape love that transcends anything we have ever known. Plus, we will get to know and see the souls who were saved as a result of our Holy Spirit directed seed planting, watering, and/or harvesting.

It is also important to realize that this list is based upon human understanding and reasoning. For there will be much more! “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 1 Corinthians 2:9

Given all that God has done for us...and all that He has in store for us...
it is important to remember...
nothing we do for ourselves will remain...only what we do for Him!

May you continually find peace, and joy, and blessings as you grow in His grace and His love.

Harold D. Thomas

Click on the link below to listen to a wonderful music video by Keith Green called "When I Hear the Praises Start." I personally consider this to be the best song ever written...because it is a love song from Jesus to us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HooQgzELw0>