

# The Kind of Giving that God Rewards...

“And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

-- Matthew 6:4b

We are often loathed to think of rewards when it comes to our service of God... Secretly we wish that we would be rewarded richly, but in conversation we would never admit it. We prefer to play Christian superheroes by pretending that the only right way to serve God is for the sake of service itself, and that we should never even imagine the possibility of being rewarded. Well friends, when we think this way we think in a way that is very different from the way Jesus thought. Jesus often made reference to the fact that there will be reward for those who serve God well, and punishment for those who don't. It is a fact that is undeniable; the intentional Christian life will be a life rewarded by God Himself... So, instead of shying away from this issue we should rather try to understand more about what Jesus meant when he talked about rewards.

In his book *The Weight of Glory*, C.S. Lewis notes how believers often underestimate the full riches that God has for His children: “If we consider the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures... like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

In Matthew 6:1-4 we find a very clear picture of the sort of giving that Jesus said God would reward; a giving that is done in secret. But before we get ahead of ourselves let's pause for a moment and reflect more carefully on the issue of rewards. In order for us to understand the Christian concept of rewards for a life well lived in faithful service to God, there are three lessons that we must learn:

Firstly, there is such a thing as the *Effort/Reward Ratio*. This is not only true of life in general, but also of our Christian lives. The more effort we put in, the harder we work, the more earnest we are in our endeavours, the greater the discipline we apply the greater our reward will be.

Secondly, God will only give *Rewards that Matter!* It is a common human trait... we tend to chase after the trivial, temporary rewards that this world has to offer, while we underestimate the true value of the rewards that God has in store for us. Richard Baxter, an English puritan preacher once said: “It is a most lamentable thing to see how most people spend their time and their energy for trifles, while God is cast aside... It is lamentable indeed... that [we] run after the childish toys of the world!”

Finally, God tends to *Reward in Secret*. It is true that most of enjoy being thanked for the work we do, we like the little rewards for jobs well done that come our way every so often. Most of us are offended when our efforts are not acknowledged. But the fact is that God often rewards only in secret – not exclusively, of course, there are times when God rewards very publicly, but very often his rewards are offered in the secret place of our relationships with him.

## Food for Thought:

William Barclay once said: “We have a pattern for giving in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to his friends at Corinth: ‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich’. Our giving must never be the grim and self-righteous outcome of a sense of duty, still less must it be done to enhance our own glory and prestige among men; it must be the instinctive outflow of the loving heart; we must give to others as Jesus Christ gave himself to us.”