

***The Law of Rewards*** by Randy Alcorn, Tyndale, Wheaton, IL, 2003  
(63 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

*Introduction: Not Divesting, but Investing*

### **1. Giving Is Not Wrong**

What's the biggest misconception Christians have about giving? That when we give money away to a church or ministry, or to help the needy, it's gone. While we hope others will benefit from it, we're quite sure we won't. We think we're *divesting* ourselves of money, disassociating from it. Once it leaves our hands, we imagine, it has no connection to us, no future implications relevant to our lives.

We couldn't be more wrong. [Page ix]

### **2. Investing in Heaven**

...now is our window of opportunity not to *divest* ourselves of money but to *invest* it in heaven. We don't have to have everything taken from us. We can give it before disaster or death strike. Now is our chance to give what we can't keep to gain what we can't lose.[Page ix]

### **3. Earthly Things Are Temporary**

We forget earth is not our home, so we waste our lives pouring ourselves and our money into what will go up in smoke. Meanwhile, God offers us the opportunity to experience a down payment of joy-the delight that comes today in doing what you know God wants, and anticipating hearing him say to you tomorrow, "Well done." [Page xii]

### **4. Behavior Determines Rewards**

...faith in Jesus is our one and only basis for entering heaven. But the Bible shows that while our faith determines our eternal destination, our behavior-including what we do with our money-determines our eternal rewards. [Page xii]

*Chapter 1 What Determines Our Rewards*

### **5. The Joy of Kingdom Giving**

If you wonder why God has blessed your business, maybe it's not because the goods and services you offer are so extraordinary. Maybe it's because he wants to provide you with more money to give back to him, and more reward in heaven! And if you don't realize that, you'll never experience the joy of giving, the thrill of kingdom investing he desires for you.

Go back to what Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Why? Perhaps because when we give it blesses not one but three parties-God, the

recipient, and us. We shouldn't be content with the first blessing, which is when we receive money from God. There is the second blessing of our giving so that others receive, and the third blessing of God being pleased. It is the second and third blessings that keep the first blessing from becoming a curse of having too much, and centering our lives around money and things.

Ironically, the blessing on us when we give money is always greater than if we had kept it. (This is part of God's law of rewards.)

## **Reward Principle #1: Giving Brings Greater Blessing than Receiving [Page 10]**

### *Chapter 2: Fireproofing our money*

#### **6. In God's Hands, Things Are Secure**

*I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.* MARTIN LUTHER [Page 15]

#### **7. The Heavenly Treasury**

Jesus invites us to choose our treasury. Will we invest our treasures on earth and lose them when we die? Or will we invest our treasures in heaven, where they will be ours for eternity? [Page 18]

#### **8. Material Things Don't Last**

Christ's primary argument against amassing material wealth isn't that it's morally wrong but simply that it's a poor investment. Material things just won't stand the test of time. Even if they escape moths and rust and thieves, they cannot escape that coming fire of God that will consume the material world.

Jesus isn't saying it's wrong to invest. He's saying, "Don't make a stupid investment; make a smart one." John Wesley said, "I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity."

David Livingstone said, "I place no value on anything I possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God."

God's kingdom was the reference point for these men. They saw all else in light of that kingdom. They were compelled to live as they did, not because they treasured no things, but because they treasured the right things.

Consider missionary martyr Jim Elliot's words. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." People often think of Elliot as one of those super-spiritual missionary types who might be described as "unconcerned about gain." But they couldn't be more wrong. We focus on his willingness to sacrifice and serve, but we

overlook his passion for personal gain. In fact, that's what his famous words are all about! Reread them and you'll see that *Jim Elliot was seeking gain!* What separated him from the common Christian wasn't that he didn't want gain, but that *he wanted gain that would last.* [Pages 18-19]

### **9. Investing in Christ**

The greatest treasure is Christ himself. To Paul, gaining Christ made everything else seem comparatively worthless (Philippians 3:7-11). But the rewards God promises us are treasures too, and he expects us to want them. Christ offers us the incredible opportunity to trade temporary goods and currency for eternal rewards. By putting our money and possessions in his treasury while we're still on earth, we assure ourselves of vastly greater eternal rewards in heaven. [Page 21]

**10. Reward Principle #2: When we invest money now in God's Kingdom, we will receive greater rewards in Heaven later.** [Page 21]

### **11. What We Share Comes Back**

What we keep we will lose. What we give and share and do in Christ's name will ultimately come back to us in heaven, in a far better and permanent form. [Page 21]

### **12. Heavenly Treasures Will be Waiting**

Whatever treasures we store upon earth will be left behind when we leave. Whatever treasures we store up in heaven will be waiting for us when we arrive.

The reality of eternal rewards inevitably fosters an investment mentality. For instance, with \$15,000 I may be able to buy a new car. With the same money, I could help translate the Scriptures for an unreached people group, support church planting, feed the hungry in the name of Christ, get gospel literature distributed in Southeast Asia, or send out multiple Nigerian or Indian missionary families and support them full-time for a year. If I have an investment mentality, I ask myself, *what's the better investment for eternity?* If I need a car, I may ask, *Can I buy a used one and give away the difference to God's kingdom?* [Page 22]

### **13. Whatever Is Christ's Is Immortal**

A. W. Tozer said, "Any temporal possession can be turned into everlasting wealth. Whatever is given to Christ is immediately touched with immortality."<sup>3</sup> [Page 23]

### **14. Past Generations More Serious About Heavenly Treasures**

Paul told the rich in this world that through their generosity and good deeds they may "lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age" (1 Timothy 6:19). Christians throughout the ages have taken these passages literally. Consequently, they have been far less serious than we are about earthly treasures, and far more serious about heavenly treasures.

John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* from an English prison cell to which he had been condemned for unlicensed preaching of the gospel. This is how he interpreted the words of Christ and Paul:

Whatever good thing you do for Him, if done according to the Word, is laid up for you as treasure in chests and coffers, to be brought out to be rewarded before both men and angels, to your eternal comfort.

Is this a biblical concept? Absolutely. Paul spoke about the Philippians' financial giving and explained, "Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account" (Philippians 4:17). God keeps an account open for us in heaven, and every gift given for his glory is a deposit in that account. Not only God, not only others, but we are the eternal beneficiaries of our giving.

Have you been making regular deposits into your account in heaven? [Page 24]

### *Chapter 3. Gaining What You Cannot Lose*

#### **15. Acts of Kindness**

The law of rewards, which God has built into the universe, requires that every act of kindness and obedience be rewarded. But not only will there be rewards in heaven for the cup of water given on earth, those rewards will *never disappear*. The act of kindness will be remembered forever and its reward will always last. Hence, eternal rewards are not only rewards we'll receive in eternity, but rewards that are themselves eternal, imperishable, and inexhaustible (1 Peter 1:4).[Pages 27-28]

#### **16. Reward Principle #3: God offers us rewards that are eternal, imperishable and inexhaustible.** [Page 28]

#### **17. Wesley Left Nothing When He Died**

John Wesley said, "Money never stays with me. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find its way into my heart."

Wesley earned considerable book royalties. At a time when a single man could live comfortably on thirty pounds a year, his annual income reached fourteen hundred.<sup>5</sup> Yet Wesley's goal was to give so generously that he would leave virtually nothing behind when he died. He achieved that goal.[Page 28]

### *Chapter 4. Two Perspectives, Two Masters*

## **18. Where Your Money Is, Your Heart Is Also**

I've heard people say, "I want more of a heart for missions." I always respond, "Jesus tells you exactly how to get it. Put your money in missions, and your heart will follow."

Do you wish you had a greater heart for the poor and lost? Then give your money to help the poor and reach the lost. Do you want your heart to be in your church? Put your money there. Your heart will always be where your money is. Your heart will never be where your money isn't. If most of your money is in mutual funds, retirement, your house, or your hobby, that's where your heart is going to be. [Page 35]

## **19. Giving Is a Joyful Surrender**

Giving is the alternative to spending or hoarding that breaks the back of materialism. The act of giving is a vivid reminder that it's all about God, not about us. Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater person and a greater agenda. It affirms Christ's lordship. Giving dethrones me and exalts him. It breaks the chains of mammon that would enslave me. It makes heaven, not earth, my center of gravity. [Page 36]

## **20. This Life Is a Preface**

As believers in Christ, our theology gives us perspective. It tells us that this life is the preface-not the book. It's the preliminaries-not the main event. It's the tune-up-not the concert. [Page 37]

## **21. Our Present Life Is a Dot**

I think of our lives in terms of a dot and a line, signifying two phases. Our present life on earth is the dot. It begins. It ends. It's brief. However, from the dot, a line extends that goes on forever. That line is eternity, which Christians will spend in heaven.

Right now we're living in the dot. But what are we living *for*? The shortsighted person lives for the dot. The person with perspective lives for the line.

Like evangelism and Bible study and moral purity, giving is living for the line. [Page 38]

## **22. Crediting Our Heavenly Account**

Paul spoke about the Philippians' financial giving' explaining, "Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account" (Philippians 4:17). God keeps an account open for us in heaven, and every gift given for his glory is a deposit in that account. When we give, we withdraw funds from our earthly account to have them credited to our heavenly account. Not only God, not only others, but we are the eternal beneficiaries of our giving.

The money God entrusts to us is eternal investment capital. Every day is an opportunity to buy up more shares in his kingdom.

*You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.* [Page 40]

### *Chapter 3. Looking Through Eternity's Lens*

**23. Reward Principle #4: When we see our lives through the lens of eternity, our attitude toward wealth will change dramatically.** [Page 47]

**24. Today's Message Focus on Now**

Many of us habitually think and act as if there were no eternity-or as if what we do in this present life has no eternal consequences.

How many sermons about heaven or hell have most of us heard lately? How many modern gospel booklets even mention the words *heaven* or *hell*? The trend is to focus on our present circumstances instead of our eternal future. Yet Scripture states that eternal realities should influence the character of our present life, right down to every word we speak and every action we take (James 2:12; 2 Peter 3:11-12).[Page 47]

**25. God's Words as Guides**

*"For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ... Each of us will give an account of himself to God." (Romans 14:10,12)*

*`From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (Luke 12:48) [Page 48]*

**26. Heaven's Citizens**

The Bible tells us we are pilgrims, strangers, aliens, ambassadors working far from home (Hebrews 11:13; 2 Corinthians 5:20). Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). But we've become so attached to this world that we live for the wrong kingdom. We forget our true home, built for us by our bridegroom (John 14:1-2). Paul said, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far" (Philippians 1:23).

C. S. Lewis said, "Our Father refreshes us on the journey with some pleasant inns, but will not encourage us to mistake them for home." Too many of us spend our lives mistaking these temporary residences for our true home. But our home is in another place-and each day we are one day closer to it. [Page 49]

**27. Judgement of Our Actions**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was right: grace is free, but it is not cheap. Jesus' sacrifice writes our name in the Lamb's Book of Life, saving believers from the judgment that leads to hell. However-and this is something rarely proclaimed in most churches-we will face another judgment for our actions on earth. [Page 52]

## **28. Setting Our Minds on Things Above.**

Some people always object that they don't want to be the kind of person who is "so heavenly minded they are of no earthly good." While I've often heard that expression, I've never once met someone of whom it was true! In fact, we are *commanded* to "set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (Colossians 3:2). Our problem isn't that we're too heavenly minded but that we're too earthly minded. That's exactly why Jesus commanded us to stop storing up treasures on earth and start storing them up in heaven. A. W. Tozer said,

It has been cited as a flaw in Christianity that it is more concerned with the world to come than with the world that now is.... No one who knows what the New Testament is about will worry over the charge that Christianity is other-worldly. Of course it is, and that is precisely where its power lies.'

*Chapter 6. Heaven: The home we've never been*

## **29. Preparing Us for Heaven**

We were made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place.

Jesus is the one preparing that place for us. And he's also preparing us for that place.  
[Page 55]

## **30. Christ Searches Hearts and Minds**

The Lord's evaluation of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 shows that he's watching us, evaluating us. He is "keeping score." As an instructor gives grades to his students, Christ gives grades to his churches. To Christians, Jesus says, "I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds" (Revelation 2:23).

Scripture teaches with unmistakable clarity that all believers in Christ will give an account of their lives to their Lord (Romans 14:10-12). We will be judged by him according to our works, both good and bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). The result of this will be the gain or loss of eternal rewards (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). [Page 60]

## **31. Judgement of Our Works**

Our sins are totally forgiven when we come to Christ, and we do stand justified in him (Romans 5:1; 8:1). Scripture is emphatic on this point, []. Nevertheless, the Bible speaks about a coming judgment of our works, not our sins. When we commit sins or neglect doing righteous acts we should have done, we are not doing what we could to lay up precious stones on the foundation of Christ. Therefore, these sins contribute to our "suffering loss." Through this loss of reward, the believer is considered to be

receiving his "due" for his works, "whether good or bad." So what we do as believers, both good and bad, will have certain eternal effects. [Pages 62-63]

### *Chapter 7: Daily Shaping our Eternal Future*

#### **32. Disobedience Is Stupid**

God calls us to obey him not simply because it's right but because it's smart. He warns us against disobedience not just because it's wrong but also because it's stupid. [Page 65]

#### **33. Reward Principle #5: Obeying God is not only right, it's smart. It will always pay off in the end.**

#### **34. Everything Right Pays Off**

Every time Scripture talks about the judgment seat of Christ, it is affirming this principle: Ultimately, when we stand before God, everything that is right will pay off enormously, and everything that is wrong will be seen to have been terribly stupid. [Page 67]

#### **35. Well Done, Good and Faithful Servants**

We know Christ will say to some (but not all) believers, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21). Not "Well said" or "Well believed" but "Well done." What separates the sheep from the goats is what they did and didn't do with their God-entrusted resources of time, money, and possessions. [Page 69]

#### **36. Didn't Give Enough**

At the end of the movie *Schindler's List*, there's a heart-wrenching scene in which Oskar Schindler—who bought from the Nazis the lives of many Jews—looks at his car and his gold pin and regrets that he didn't give more of his money and possessions to save more lives. Schindler had used his opportunity far better than most. But in the end, he longed for a chance to go back and make better choices. [Page 72]

#### **37. Investing in That Day**

Martin Luther said that on his calendar there were only two days: "today" and "that Day." May we invest our money and possessions today in light of *that* day. [Page 74]

### *Chapter 8 Welcomed into Heaven's Home*

#### **38. Life Is Not Done at Death**

When I go to the grave I can say, as others have said, "My day's work is done." But I cannot say, "My life is done." My work will recommence the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes upon the twilight but opens upon the dawn. VICTOR HUGO [Page 77]

### **39. Managing God's Assets**

Through mismanagement of God's funds we can lose credibility with people as well as God's willingness to entrust us with more. Having been faithful in handling our resources in this life, we are granted leadership of others in the next life (Luke 19:17, 19). [Page 84]

#### *Chapter 9 From Here to Eternity's Rewards*

### **40. Rewards as He Promises**

*It is my happiness that I have served Him who never fails to reward His servants to the full extent of His promise.* JOHN CALVIN [Page 87]

### **41. What Does God Reward?**

According to the Bible, God rewards for many things, including doing good works (Ephesians 6:8; Romans 2:6, 10), denying ourselves (Matthew 16:24-27), showing compassion to the needy (Luke 14:13-14), and treating our enemies kindly (Luke 6:35). He also grants us rewards for sacrificial and generous giving: "Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21).

God promises rewards to those who endure difficult circumstances while trusting him (Hebrews 10:34-36), to those who live faithfully and with good motives (1 Corinthians 4:2,5), and to those who persevere under persecution (Luke 6:22-23). God will richly reward a life of godliness (2 Peter 3:11-14).

God will also reward those who make wise and productive use of the resources and opportunities he has given them (Matthew 25:14-23).

Paul reminds us there's a timetable for the harvest: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9). Like the law of gravity, the law of rewards-the law of the harvest-is always in effect, even when we can't see it. Everything and everyone in human history is headed toward a day of reaping, even if it does not seem obvious. [Pages 88-89]

### **42. Rewards Are in Heaven**

Prosperity theology gets it right that God rewards faithfulness but gets it wrong when it comes to the location and timing of rewards. It assumes rewards are here and now, while Scripture teaches us that the greatest rewards will be not here and now but then and there. [Page 89]

### **43. There Will Be Persecution**

We're told, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). In the short term, this teaches exactly the opposite of prosperity

theology. But in the long term we are always promised that obedience brings eternal rewards that far exceed any temporary hardship:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

#### **44. The Reward of Rulership**

Believers will reign with Christ over the world (Revelation 20:6). We'll even rule over angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). Some will be put "in charge of many things" (Matthew 25:21-23). Christ spoke of granting some followers rulership over cities—eleven cities for one, five for another, and none for a third, in proportion to their faithful service (Luke 19:17-24).

It's apparent from these passages that although all believers will be with Christ, not all will reign with him, at least not with equal responsibility and authority. There are stated conditions for reigning: "If we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12). Christ promises, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne" (Revelation 3:21). [Pages 90-91]

#### **45. Crowns as Rewards**

Crowns are a common symbol of ruling power, though they may symbolize other rewards as well. Five crowns are mentioned in the New Testament:

1. The crown of life—given for faithfulness to Christ in persecution or martyrdom (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).
2. The incorruptible crown—given for determination, discipline, and victory in the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).
3. The crown of rejoicing—given for pouring oneself into others in evangelism and discipleship (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians 4:1).
4. The crown of glory—given for faithfully representing Christ in a position of spiritual leadership (1 Peter 5:1-4). (Note that a prerequisite is being "not greedy for money, but eager to serve." A Christian leader's preoccupation with money can forfeit this reward.)
5. The crown of righteousness—given for joyfully purifying and readying oneself to meet Christ at his return (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

There's nothing in this list that suggests it's exhaustive. There may be innumerable crowns and types of crowns and rewards unrelated to crowns. But all are graciously given by the Lord Jesus in response to the faithful efforts of the believer, which themselves are empowered by God's grace.

These crowns bring glory to Christ as they are laid before his feet (Revelation 4:10), showing that our rewards are given not merely for our recognition but for God's glory. Although God's glory is the highest reason for any action, Scripture sees no contradiction between God's eternal glory and our eternal good. On the contrary, glorifying God will always result in our greatest eternal good. Likewise, pursuing our eternal good, as he commands us to do, will always glorify God.

False humility says, "I want no reward." Effectively that means, "I want nothing to lay at Christ's feet to bring him glory." We may think we are taking the spiritual high ground by being disinterested in rewards, but this is foreign to Scripture. Of course we should desire rewards. Hearing our Master say, "Well done" will not simply be for our pleasure but for his!

We are to guard our crowns carefully (Revelation 3:11). Why? Because we can be disqualified from receiving them (1 Corinthians 9:27). We can lose them (1 Corinthians 3:15). They can be taken from us (Matthew 25:28-29). We can seek our rewards from men, thereby forfeiting them from God (Matthew 6:5-6). John warns, "Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully" (2 John 8). We can fail to gain rewards, and we can forfeit rewards already in our account. [Pages 91-92]

#### **46. Reward Principle #6: We will have differing levels of reward in Heaven, depending on our actions and choices on earth.**

#### **47. Differences in Rewards in Heaven**

Scripture is clear that there's a payback in eternity according to what was done during our time on earth, and there will be commensurate differences in our rewards (Proverbs 24:12; Matthew 19:27-30; Luke 14:12-14). In other words, our experiences in heaven will not be identical. (Obviously, in heaven there will be no conceit, pettiness, jealousy, or unhealthy comparisons, but there nonetheless will be differences in reward and position.) [Page 94]

#### **48. Salvation**

Past (1 John 3:2)

Free (Eph. 2:8-9)

Can't be lost (John 10:28-29)

Same for all Christians (Rom. 3:22)

For those who believe (John 3:16)

#### **Rewards**

Future (Rev. 22:12)

Earned (1 Cor. 3:8)

Can be lost (2 John 1:8)

Differ among Christians (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

For those who work (1 Cor. 9:27)

Salvation is about God's work for us. Conversely, rewards are a matter of our work for God. When it comes to salvation, our work for God is no substitute for God's work for us. God saves us because of Christ's work, not ours. Likewise, when it comes to rewards, God's work for us is no substitute for our work for God. God *rewards us* for our work, not Christ's. (Of course, it is *empowered* by Christ, but God nevertheless refers to it as our work.) [Page 96]

#### **49. Eternal Destination and Rewards**

Belief (trust, faith) determines our eternal destination: *where* we will be. Behavior (obedience, works) determines our eternal rewards: what we will have there. Works do not affect our destination, since our redemption is secured by the work of Christ. However, works do affect our reward experienced at that destination.

Just as there are eternal consequences to our faith, so there are eternal consequences to our works. [Page 97]

#### *Chapter 10: Rewards: Our Missing Motivation*

#### **50. Doing Good for Him**

Whatever good thing you do for Him, if done according to the Word, is laid up for you as treasure in chests and coffers, to be brought out to be rewarded before both men and angels, to your eternal comfort. JOHN BUNYAN [Page99]

#### **51. Short-term Disgrace, Long-term Reward**

Moses "regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because . . ." Stop right there. Because why? Now read the rest: "because he was looking ahead to his reward" (Hebrews 11:26). Motivated by long-term reward, he chose short-term disgrace. Not because he wanted disgrace, but because he wanted reward!

This prospect of eternal reward from his Master's hand was Paul's consuming motivation throughout his life:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Yes, Paul recognized there was a price that must be paid to follow Christ with discipline and faithfulness. But he was willing to pay the price because of the prize. He recognized the law of rewards, and he gladly sacrificed lesser treasures that wouldn't last for greater treasures that would last. [Pages 100-101]

## **52. Greater Reward from God than People**

"Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High" (Luke 6:35, NASB). We are to expect nothing in return from people, knowing that we will receive a far greater reward in return from God's gracious hand.

## **53. Reward Principle #7: Desiring Rewards is a proper motivation for serving Christ.** [Page 103]

## **54. God Wants to Reward Us**

God will reward the child who gave to the missions offering the money she'd saved for a softball mitt. He'll reward the teenager who kept himself pure despite all the temptations. He'll reward the man who tenderly cared for his wife with Alzheimer's, the mother who raised the child with cerebral palsy, the child who rejoiced despite his handicap. He'll reward the unskilled person who was faithful and the skilled person who was meek and servant-hearted. He'll reward the parents who modeled Christ to their children and the children who followed him despite their parents' bad example. He'll reward those who suffered while trusting him, and those who helped the ones who were suffering. He'll reward the couple who downsized, selling their large house to live in a small one and give all the money away to missions.

He doesn't *have* to reward anyone for anything. He does it because he wants to! And make no mistake: regardless of what you and I think about it, that's exactly what he's going to do. "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person *according to what he has done*" (Matthew 16:27, italics mine). [Page 106]

## **55. The Motivators of Fear and Love**

We should evangelize out of our love for God. But if that isn't enough, our love for other people should motivate us. Scripture tells us we should also be motivated to evangelize out of our fear of God. We will stand before the judgment seat and be recompensed for our works, Paul says, adding, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:10-11). Love is one motivator. Fear is another. Reward is another. If one or two of these motives don't seem enough, the three together should. [Page 108]

## **56. Rewarding Obedience**

The believer who knows God's Word knows its promise of reward for obedience. God has set up a system that rewards obedience and punishes disobedience. He rewards others-centered sacrifice and punishes self-centered indulgence. What's right is always smart, because it will be rewarded. What's wrong is always stupid, because it will be punished. This is the way God has made things. This system-not our personal preferences-should be our reference point in deciding what to do with our lives, our time, and our money and possessions. [Page 109]

### *Chapter 11 Power, Pleasure, and Possessions: Temptations or Motivations?*

## **57. Faith is the Key to Self-denial**

We admire Olympic athletes for their dedication and discipline, but we don't imagine they're not acting from self-interest, do we? We're right to admire a missionary, someone who works with street children, or someone who feeds the poor. Yet what they are doing is not selfless in the full sense of the term. Their short-term sacrifices are in their eternal self-interest, because God promises to reward them. This is not self-denial for its own sake, but purposeful self-denial for God's glory and their own ultimate good. The key to this self-denial is faith, as described and exemplified in Hebrews 11:8-16. Faith is what motivates us to forgo something in this life for the promise that it-or something even better-will be ours in the next life. [Page 115]

## **58. God Is a Rewarder of Those Who Diligently Seek Him**

In fact, the two most basic things we can believe about God are first that he exists, and second that *he is a rewarder* of those who diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). If you don't believe God is a rewarder, you are rejecting a major biblical doctrine and have a false view of God. I encourage you to go back to the Scriptures and ask God to open your eyes to the truth about his nature and how he motivates his people. [Page 116]

## **59. Be Glad for Eternal Rewards**

John Bunyan, the seventeenth-century pastor who was imprisoned for preaching the gospel, said of eternal rewards, "They are such as should make us leap to think on, and that we should remember with exceeding joy, and never think that it is contrary to the Christian faith, to rejoice and be glad for [them]."<sup>12</sup> [Page 117]

## **60. God Promises to Pay Back**

The person who gives life, money, and possessions to receive rewards from God-the greatest of which is to hear the resounding "Well done"-is one whose deepest thirsts will be eternally quenched by the Maker and Fulfiller of desire. [Page 119]

Christ said, "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor.... Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:13-14). God

says he himself will repay us. The word "repay" means that God chooses to put us, unworthy though we are, in a position to be paid back. It's his promise. [Page 124]

### **61. What are we missing if we do not give, especially to the needy?**

If we don't reach out in our giving, as individuals and as churches, we miss out on a central aspect of biblical teaching: God's deep concern for the poor and needy. It was said of King Josiah, "He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me?" Jeremiah 22:16).

We miss out on *Christlikeness*, because Christ is the ultimate giver (2 Corinthians 8:9). "Grace" is giving, and Jesus was full of grace and truth. Giving is an expression of his basic nature. We give because he first gave to us.

We also miss out on a *great privilege*. When the Macedonians were told they didn't need to give because they were so poor themselves, they "urgently pleaded ... for the privilege" of giving to the needy (2 Corinthians 8:4).

We miss out on *blessing*, because Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

We miss out on *evangelistic opportunities*, because so many of these come when we reach out to the poor. Jesus said people would know us by our love for one another. After explaining how the early church would sell their assets to give to the needy, Scripture tells us God added to the church's numbers daily (Acts 2:47). No wonder, since their radical concern for the needy could only be explained by a powerful work of God.

By failing to reach out to the needy, we miss out on *eternal rewards*, because Jesus said if we give to those who can't pay us back, God himself will pay us back by rewarding us in heaven (Luke 14:14). [Pages 124-125]

### **62. Joy and Eternal Rewards**

There are two different ways for pastors to appeal to their people concerning giving: Give because it will bring you joy, and give because it will bring you eternal reward. In other words, don't do it because it's right, but because it will bring you joy. [Page 126]

### **63. Follow Others' Footprints**

I shouldn't brag about my Bible study or prayer or evangelism or giving, but I shouldn't cover it up, either. It's easier for people in our churches to follow footprints than commands. If we aren't willing to openly and humbly discuss giving, how can we expect to raise up givers? We can only be spurred on by what we can see. [Pages 129-130]

## ENDNOTES

1. A. W. Tozer, "The Transmutation of Wealth," in *Born after Midnight* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1959), 106.
2. John White, *The Cost of Commitment* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 47.
3. A. W. Tozer, "The Transmutation of Wealth," 107.
4. John Bunyan, as quoted by Bruce Wilkinson, "Walk Thru Eternal Rewards" seminar and notebook (Atlanta, Ga.: Walk Thru the Bible Ministries, 1987).
5. Charles Edward White, "Four Lessons on Money from One of the World's Richest Preachers," *Christian History* 19 (Summer 1988): 21.
6. Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle. Discovering the Secret of Joyful Giving* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 2001), 13.
7. Randy Alcorn, *In Light of Eternity: Perspectives on Heaven* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: WaterBrook, 1999), 1-3.
8. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 115.
9. A. W. Tozer, "The World to Come" in *Of God and Men* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Christian Publications, 1960), 127, 129-30.
10. John Bunyan, "The Resurrection of the Dead, and Eternal judgment," <http://philologos.org/eb-jb/Resurrection/dead05.htm>
11. I am indebted here to some insights on reward shared by Bruce Wilkinson in a one-day gathering for Christian leaders at Western Seminary in 1987.
12. John Bunyan, "Paul's Departure and Crown," [www.johnbunyan.org/text/bun-paul.txt](http://www.johnbunyan.org/text/bun-paul.txt)
13. William Wilberforce, *Real Christianity* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1982), 65.
14. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 17-18, 3-4.
15. Richard Baxter, "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1981), 39-40.
16. Randy Alcorn, "Nineteen Questions to Ask before You Give to Any Ministry," [www.epm.org/givquest.html](http://www.epm.org/givquest.html).

## THE LAW OF REWARDS AND ITS EIGHT PRINCIPLES

**While our faith determines our eternal destination, our behavior determines our eternal rewards.**

Reward Principle #1: Giving brings greater blessing than receiving.

Reward Principle #2: When we invest money now in God's kingdom, we will receive great rewards later in heaven.

Reward Principle #3: God offers us rewards that are eternal, imperishable, and inexhaustible.

Reward Principle #4: When we see our lives through the lens of eternity, our attitude toward wealth will change drastically.

Reward Principle #5: Obeying God is not only right, it's smart. It will always pay off in the end.

Reward Principle #6: We will have differing levels of reward in heaven, depending on our actions and choices on earth.

Reward Principle #7: Desiring rewards is a proper motivation for serving Christ.

Reward Principle #8: We are not to be motivated primarily by earthly power, possessions, and pleasures, yet we are offered all three in heaven if we invest now in God's kingdom.