

Please Don't Thank Me!

We live in a society that is obsessed with praise. When I taught leadership classes I used to refer to this phenomenon as "praise junkies."

Most of us were taught as young children to say, "Please" and "Thank You." I know a young mom that actually asks her young children to obey her and then says, "thank you" at the very end of her "request," even before they have obeyed – it seems odd to me. She says, "Adam, take your

feet off that table, thank you" all in one breath. Consequently, her young son may or may not comply with the "request."

You may ask, "What does saying "thank you" have to do with being a "praise junkie"? Is there anything wrong with saying thank you? Is there anything wrong with expecting others to say thank you for something you have done for them? From a worldly perspective there is much to be said in this regard, but let's focus on what the Bible has to say about being a "praise junkie."

Let's begin with the assumption that we are actually doing something "good" – helping someone in need, giving to the poor, legitimately ministering to the needs (physical, financial, spiritual, etc.) of others. Believers are told in many Scriptures that the Lord wants to "reward" them for doing so. He says that when He comes to get us at the Rapture His reward will be "with Him." Sounds good so far, right?

So, what's the problem? And **what might "disqualify" a believer from getting a reward from the Lord** for these acts of charity and kindness?

PROBLEM #1

One of the most overlooked and misunderstood reason is the fact that **for each "reward worthy" act of goodness there can be only ONE reward.**

In his book, *Heavenly Rewards*, Dr. Mark Hitchcock lists several ways that our rewards (given out by Jesus Himself at the Bema Seat Judgment of the Saints) can be "lost." This blog is focusing on "Loss by Defect." Dr. Hitchcock says, "Our work can be defective when our motives are wrong. As we've already seen, God cares about the *why* as well as the *what*. Self-promoting motives render our works defective, resulting in a loss of rewards.ⁱ

Matthew 6:1-4 "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

² "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, **so that they may be honored by men.** Truly I say to you, **they have their reward in full.** ³ But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

I know a person who spent quite a bit of time and money making blankets, hats, gloves, etc. for homeless people. I mean literally making a hundred of them each summer and fall so she could take them to the homeless mission at the beginning of each winter. She often made a big deal telling everyone that she did this and gave the "count" of how many. They were quite nice, and I am sure they were greatly appreciated by the recipients. I see absolutely nothing wrong with doing this. I feel fairly certain when I say that the Lord appreciated it too. The only problem is that by telling everyone about it, making sure that she was noticed and appreciated (quite an ordinary human trait), she forfeited a heavenly reward for these great acts of kindness and charity. Matthew 6:1 is pretty clear about this. We only get a "reward" once – we can decide to take it on earth with the honor of men or wait until we get before the Bema Seat and get it there.

One other thing we might consider is that **the "reward" of men usually only lasts a few minutes at best.** They say how great you are, maybe put something in the church bulletin or hey, if it's "big enough," you might even get your name on a building. But even that "big" pales in comparison to the reward in heaven. We are told that **Jesus' rewards "last for eternity"**- now **THAT'S a REWARD worth waiting for!**

PROBLEM #2

Another problem with doing things so that others notice and say, "Thank you" or reward you in some other way is the grave danger needing, wanting, expecting or accepting it puts us in. **That danger is called – PRIDE.** Pride is one of the most insidious sins. For one thing, it presupposes that we have anything to give to someone else. Don't all things come from God in the first place? So, who are we to act as if good things come from us rather than God?

1 Corinthians 4:7 For who regards you as superior? **What do you have that you did not receive?** And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

James 1:17 **Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above,** coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

Mathew 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, **and qlorify your Father who is in heaven.**

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Not too long ago I attended a Christian conference that featured several young speakers all telling about the "good things they were doing for God." I'll admit that most of them were actually quite good things (like the lady who was making blankets and hats). I chuckled when some of them felt so good about themselves because they were "giving away some of their profits" while others were getting others to give money to them so they could give it away. But that's not my point.

My point is that they were there – to be blunt – to brag, to make sure that everyone knew what they were doing (under the "guise" of encouraging others to do the same). The focus of the conference was them. The promoters of the conference invited and encouraged them to do so. In my opinion, shame on them (the conference promoters). By promoting this they (1) "helped" ensure that these young entrepreneurs would not get a heavenly (eternal reward) but rather substituted it for cheap praise for the weekend, and (2) set them up for the great possibility of "a fall" because of pride.

This is quite sad, if you ask me. It is bad enough when we do this to ourselves. Let's be very careful not to bring others into it as well.

So, what is the answer to this issue?

- 1. **As often as possible do your good works "in secret"** be quiet about it. Do it with joy. It's actually quite "fun" to allow people to wonder "where did this come from?" (Matthew 6:3)
- 2. If others see or notice, **be quick to promote the true originator of the gift or service** (Matthew 5:16). I used to like to say, "I am able to do this because God "prepaid me" so it's really His money (etc.) not mine, I'm one of His bookkeepers. He wanted you to have this so thank Him, not me, please." Genuinely and sincerely ask people not to thank you but point them to God instead.
- 3. Be especially mindful of people thanking and or praising you for praying. Watch out of the title/label of "prayer warrior." This is especially dangerous. See To Pray or Not to Pray blog.
- 4. Pray, asking God to help you maintain a proper perspective on these things to protect you from the sin of pride, to properly view these things as His good works not yours. And to be grateful that He plans to reward you anyway. Does it get any better than that?

For more information about **eternal rewards**, I am happy to suggest two good books from writers I trust:

Heavenly Rewards by Dr. Mark Hitchcock Your Eternal Reward by Dr. Erwin Lutzer

Maranatha my friends!

ⁱ Heavenly Rewards, © 219 by Dr. Mark Hitchcock, page 61 – note this is not referring to loss of salvation, but disqualification from rewards.