



Chapter 1

Prescription Medication

If a doctor prescribed you medicine with instructions to take one dose every day for a year, would it be wise to ingest the medication in large quantities to finish it quickly? No. That would likely have adverse effects. So it is with this book called *The Heaven Project*. The material in this book is a spiritually prescribed medicine meant to ingest in small doses over an extended period. There are no bragging rights in your speedy ability to declare, *"I have read those books."* The following chapters should marinate deeply into your heart and soul and transform the way you live, and that necessitates small doses over an extended time frame. Your devotion to such will soon lead to a redeeming quality of purpose for you and result in spiritual growth.

Jesus said, *"Do not store up treasures here on Earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in Heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be."* Matthew 6:19-21 (NLT)

Most people understand what Jesus means regarding storing treasures here on Earth. However, what did He mean by storing treasures in Heaven? How is it possible to store up treasures in Heaven? The answer is discoverable by specifying who benefits when we give.

When we serve or give to someone with self-reward as motivation, a treasure on Earth occurs. Treasure-on-Earth-giving is not wrong but temporal. Jesus said in Matthew 6:1, *"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of people, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you will have no reward from your Father in Heaven."*

A treasure in Heaven occurs when we act sacrificially to serve others without recognition, self-benefit, or personal control. It is giving with the motivation to dedicate the act or gift only for the Lord's purposes. (Read Matthew 6:1-19) Treasures in Heaven occur when we act daily, as the Bible says, *"Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves."* Philippians 2:3 (NLT). When we live as that verse challenges us, it will become a natural habit

to serve others using items God has entrusted to us. I hope the following devotions you complete in *The Heaven Project* will subconsciously cause you to help others and impact their lives for eternity. If you do this, you will add treasures in Heaven daily and be in a great position eternally to share your treasure stories, as the rest of this chapter will explain.

I hope *The Heaven Project* inspires you to read God's Word more frequently, grow closer to Him through answering the Meditation Minute questions, and have fun doing it through this inspirational and creative book.

I love the movie, *Gladiator*, produced by DreamWorks and Universal Pictures, 2000. It contains two quotes that resonate with this book's theme. The first is, "*What a person does on Earth echoes in eternity.*" The second is, "*When a man knows his end, he wants to know there was some purpose for his life.*" Both quotes validate what is called *immortality projects*, defined below.

Ernest Becker wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning book titled "The Denial of Death." 1973, The Free Press. Becker focused on two major themes. The first is that humans are distinct from any other animal on the planet in that we can think abstractly. For example, dogs and cats do not sit around and worry about their careers or past mistakes or wonder what would have happened if they had done something differently. Secondly, Becker explains that we each have two versions of ourselves. He explains, "One is the physical aspects of our lives, like eating, sleeping, and going to a movie theater. The second aspect we all possess is our conceptual self, identity, or how we imagine ourselves." Becker writes about this second theme, acknowledging that "we will all die eventually," and on one level or another, we are scared about it. Becker writes about how we are motivated to leave a legacy. He calls this our "*Immortality Project.*" Immortality projects are things we do that allow us to live beyond our physical death. He writes, "*All human civilization results from our immortality projects, such as buildings, governments, war, inventions, etc. Our immortality projects are our values, better understood as barometers of meaning and worth. We all hope to leave a legacy of impact that continues beyond our death.*"

The Heaven Project is the ultimate *immortality project* user's manual. It is an idea about what might exist in Heaven; I call it Heaven's Instrument Museum, and often throughout this book, I abbreviate it as HIM.

Please try to imagine an enormous indoor-outdoor museum in Heaven. Do you know Heaven will be on this Earth, remodeled and restored to God's original intent? When Jesus returns, He will parallel the great flood circumstances, but this time He will use fire and judgment instead of a flood. (See 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21 & 22) Once fire destroys everything, God will restore the Earth's surface, bring the New Jerusalem from the heavens, and place it on the Earth. *The Heaven Project* imagines Heaven's Instrument Museum on this new Earth. This heavenly museum will have all the biblical people present, exhibiting the instruments they used to serve the Lord and His will.

Two examples, detailed in the following chapters, are as follows: First, imagine entering Heaven's Instrument Museum, where you will meet Rahab (formerly known

as Rahab, the prostitute). Rahab will be the keynote speaker and exhibit her scarlet cord instrument. We will travel to the fully restored city of Jericho on the new Earth and walk through Rahab's residence. She will speak about how God used the scarlet cord hung from her window to save her life. I imagine she will then talk about the honor of being included in the bloodline of the Messiah. When Rahab finishes speaking, there will be a Q&A regarding anything we want to ask her. HIM will be a worldwide interactive museum.

A second example has us visiting the Noah's Ark Exhibit, where Noah gives us a tour of the ark with all the animals present. We can tour the restored ark and ask Noah and his family questions. We will listen as they tell us how the great flood happened and how God reset all things to new using eight people, a giant boat, and the great flood. It is not a farfetched idea as we currently can travel to Williamstown, Kentucky, to visit The Ark Encounter. It is a spectacular experience, and now imagine how much more spectacular Heaven's Instrument Museum will be with the actual fully restored ark.

Hundreds of instruments are in the Bible, along with the people who used them to accomplish life changes for God. Each chapter of this book highlights an instrument and the people who used them. As you keep reading, you might imagine many more exhibits in HIM, including yours. That means there could be billions of displays in Heaven, requiring all of the Earth to hold this museum and eternity needed to visit them all. Each chapter of this book describes an instrument, its user, and how God used them to change people's eternal life trajectories. Every seventh chapter is a modern-day story that will touch your heart.

I pray this book will encourage you daily to invest in HIM. I am not only talking about the acronym representing Heaven's Instrument Museum but also about Him, Almighty God, who loves you and wants to spend time with you daily. I pray this series invigorates your spiritual life and clarifies your purpose in honoring Jesus daily. Jesus did pray to the Father about such, as He prayed, "*Thy Kingdom come on Earth, as it is in Heaven.*" (Matthew 6:10). We can live generously and serve our part in answering Jesus's prayer to bring a little bit of Heaven here on Earth. God wants to use you and your ordinary instruments to change the lives of others for Him. You may not believe your stories will be worthy of HIM, but as you work through this book, you will discover that God uses some of the weirdest and most minor objects in His followers' hands to change lives. Changing a life modifies the populations of Heaven and Hell. Writing this book inspired me to imagine myself as one of the billions traveling the heavenly new Earth and standing in line to meet you and experience your treasures in Heaven exhibits. Your exhibits will have you be the keynote speaker displaying the instrument used to impact lives for Jesus and then answering our questions. It could be like a worldwide state fair! Do you think there will be funnel cakes and curly fries in Heaven? Oh, I hope so!

This idea is your *Immortality Project* but for the Lord. I call it *The Heaven Project*. If you do not like public speaking and being the keynote speaker at your exhibits in HIM terrifies you, rest assured there will be no fear in Heaven. Heaven's Instrument Museum visitors will be humble people, and all the storytelling will be

out of gratefulness, with zero comparisons, jealousy, or bragging. What a heavenly museum it could be!

As you read through *The Heaven Project* books and complete the Meditation Minutes, I pray it inspires you to finish strong for the Lord. I pray that you live for the Lord's purpose and use all the instruments around you to accomplish His will. Your treasures in Heaven will humbly regale you for eternity as we celebrate all the life-change you activated. Citizens of Heaven will thank you for giving the Lord your time, talents, and treasures, and some will tell you, "*I am a life that you changed.*" Can you imagine it all?

Recommendations for how to read this book:

As you commit to reading this book, I encourage you to let it be a companion alongside your Bible. A Bible story inspires each chapter I write, and I did not always include the entire Scripture within this workbook to save space and paper. You might read before and after the referenced verse to help you grasp the story's full context. I encourage you to read the Bible story using your favorite Bible translation. All Bible verses included in this book are from the *Holman Christian Standard Bible*, Holman Bible Publishers, (2004) unless otherwise referenced. Once you have read from your Bible, read the corresponding chapter in this book, and answer the Meditation Minute questions. I recommend using your favorite journal for writing your answers. Journaling your responses will help you think clearly and allow for excellent memory retention and later referencing.

The Heaven Project is an excellent group discussion guide. Gather a group, meet with food and beverage regularly, and share your personal stories and responses. I pray that pastors worldwide will use *The Heaven Project's* sermon series outline to do a 4-part message series to inspire the congregation to greater evangelism, serve others, and store treasures in Heaven. As you begin this book, be encouraged to know that I have prayed for you.

I look forward to meeting you someday to exchange stories about how *The Heaven Project*, alongside our Bible reading, inspired us to live more dedicated to Jesus.

Blessings,

Trent A. Renner