

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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THE POWER OF INCENTIVES

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The business world grasps the power incentives produce in the market place. Salesmen work harder and the public gathers in greater numbers when incentives of reward or savings are attached to a product. An Incentive stimulates and encourages action. Does it have a place in our relationship with God?

God thinks so. He reveals the following regarding faith: *“and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him” (Hebrews 11:6).* God connects the incentive of “reward” with the action of seeking Him.

Do you seek God being motivated by the incentive of reward? This is when we might feel uncomfortable and quickly respond with what we consider a more “spiritual” response: “No, I seek God because I love Him, not because of any reward.” In light of how God has revealed his mind regarding faith and seeking after Him, is it really “more spiritual” to serve God out of the incentive of love instead of reward?

Consider the following scenario: Your father wants you on a Saturday morning to clean out the garage and clean up the yard. He says if you do this, he will take you out Saturday evening to a nice dinner and shopping spree. How would your father feel if you say, I will clean things up, but I do not want to receive anything from you for doing it? Might your father feel a little insulted?

Could it be that in our desire to be “spiritual” we manifest “pseudo-spirituality” by failing to consider that God wants us to seek the rewards he offers. God, who has created us, uses the incentive of reward to affect certain conduct. *“...If we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Timothy 2:12).* *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).* Paul certainly did not hide the reward of the crown connected with living the righteous and faithful life (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Was he less spiritual for saying, *“...henceforth there is laid for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.” ?*

Reward is not the only powerful incentive God uses to affect our conduct. God uses the incentive of “fear” as a persuasive stimulus. *“And if you call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear” (1 Peter 1:17).* Knowing the Lord will judge us in the last day, Paul was motivated to move men. *“Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Corinthians 5:11).*

Yes, “love” is definitely a powerful incentive in our relationship with God. *“Know therefore that Jehovah thy God, He is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations...” (Deuteronomy 7:9).*

“Reward”, “fear” and “love” are powerful incentives motivating us to live wisely before our God. The true spiritual person will be affected by all three incentives offered by God, instead of promoting one incentive above all others.