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Undeserved Rewards

by Steve Ham

Rewards play a big part in parenting. They can be used to encourage and sustain positive behavior in our children. But when it comes to teaching our children about eternal matters, we must first look at rewards from a heavenly perspective.

Remember the account of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19? He asked Jesus, “What must I do to have eternal life?” In response, Jesus told him to give up everything.

The young man found Jesus’s answer was not only unacceptable but also unachievable. How could anyone keep His commandments perfectly or give up everything in full obedience to the Lordship of Christ? The sad fact is, this young man found the Lordship of Jesus Christ too much to bear. He left saddened, but with his earthly possessions still in his own control.

The disciples asked Jesus the same question: “Who then can be saved?”

This time Jesus answered: “With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible.”

Basically Jesus was trying to help His disciples understand the concept of grace. Salvation is not about anything we can give up, do, or even be, but rather about what our amazing God has done. Salvation is only possible when done by the One who can do the impossible. There is nothing we can do to earn it or deserve it.

Peter, in contrast to the rich ruler, asks his own question. “We have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”

Before you display shock at Peter’s selfish question, I ask you to think about how your own parents raised you. Did we not all learn at an early age that we get good things when we do good things?

While teaching my children to be and do good is important, I have realized that I have a much higher re-

sponsibility. That is, spending time with my children and helping them to understand that nothing they ever do or become will earn them salvation. Our children truly need to realize that salvation can only come from a God who had the power to create our world and the grace to step into the world to do what we could not possibly do. By “leaving all” and fully relying on Jesus—who He is and what He has done—we find the Only Way to true joy and eternal riches.

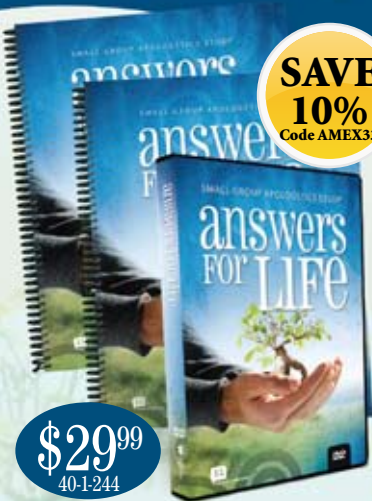
Next time you want to “reward” your children, consider doing it when they least deserve your kindness. Then they might see more clearly the reward that is waiting for them in heaven—eternal life, which was paid in full by Jesus Christ. ■



Steve Ham, brother of Ken Ham, is the director and founder of Growth Point Financial Ministries, an Australian charitable organization. Steve is married to his wife, Trisha, and is the father of two. He is also coauthor of *Answers for Life* (p. 89).



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