

"What do I need to do to hear, 'Well done, good and faithful servant' when I arrive in heaven?"

In Jesus' parable of the talents, the Lord tells of two faithful servants who used what they had been given to increase the master's wealth. When the master returned from a long absence, he rewarded his two faithful servants and said to each of them, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:21, 23). Every Christian longs to hear those words from Jesus' lips someday in heaven.

We are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9), but we are saved "to do good works" (Ephesians 2:10). Jesus spoke of laying up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20), and His parable of the talents hints at various rewards for those who faithfully serve Him in this world.

To hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant," from Jesus, first make sure you are saved. The unbelieving will never hear those words, for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). And recognize that Jesus is not only your Savior; He is also your Lord (see Luke 6:46). "Serve the LORD with gladness!" (Psalm 100:2, ESV).

Here are some ideas on ways you can serve the Lord:

1. Share the gospel. The Lord Jesus desires us to make disciples, teaching others of the nature and character of God and sharing the meaning of His death and resurrection (Matthew 28:18–20).

2. Help the disadvantaged. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31, the rich man is condemned because he doesn't help Lazarus and because he trusts in his wealth too much. Don't put self-gratification before the needs of others. First John 3:17 says, "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?"

3. Forgive others of their offenses. This isn't the same as reconciliation or trust, but it means you renounce vengeance. The Lord Jesus modeled forgiveness: "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to [the Father] who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23).

4. View your position of authority as an opportunity to help the people under you, and view your position of subservience as an opportunity to submit to your authority, just as Jesus submitted to the Father's authority. Either way, you can be Christlike, because Jesus was both master and servant to different people. "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

5. Seek to know the character of God better through church fellowship, listening to sermons, studying the Bible, praying, and chronicling how He seems to have been involved in your life.

6. Recognize that every advantageous position you're in is because of God, the Source of every blessing: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights" (James 1:17).

7. Be willing to be unpopular, displaying rare courage like the Good Samaritan in Jesus' parable (Luke 10:30–37). Do what the Bible says is right, always. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29, ESV).

8. In introspective moral judgment (evaluating your own character), look at the character of Jesus as a measure rather than rationalize your questionable actions and attitudes. Show humility.

It all comes down to this: love God more than anything, and love others sincerely (Mark 12:30–31). At the judgment seat of Christ, those who are faithful to the Lord who saved them will hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." No true servant of the Lord could ask for more.

