

## Chapter 4

### The Task

Answering the three questions of The Task is necessary for you to take action and make sure your thinking is directed on a course that will best serve your long-term financial best interests. Go and answer the questions of The Task and come back when you have spent five hours. These hours can include time in the shower and while you are driving to the grocery store or work (if you still drive to your job).

These questions are not original to me, but they are so simple, I do not think that they could be copyright protected. “The Offer” for you to accept is that I will unconditionally pay you for five hours of your time to answer the three questions of The Task for yourself, where your answers will help you financially and trend you in the direction of achieving true heart-centered wealth. The questions are:

- Who are you?
- What do you want?
- How can you serve?

Here is the section regarding The Task from my poem, The Offer:

These questions, three, that you should ask yourself  
so you will know how to enjoy your wealth  
(transparent honesty will serve you well):  
Who are you? What are your desires, for sure?  
Describe how is it that you best can serve?

I believe I first heard these questions (Who am I?  
What do I want? How can I best serve?) about two  
years ago in class from my yoga instructor, Jennifer  
Turner (who recently got her real estate agent's license).  
When I heard them, I started thinking about their  
profound simplicity.

The answers to these questions encompass all of  
the knowledge that we need to trend ourselves in the  
direction of creating heart-centered long-term economic  
success and wealth accumulation.

If you do not know the answers to these  
questions, you will apply your energy in a haphazard  
way. This is the case because you will be acting without  
self-knowledge. Without that self-knowledge, you don't  
know what it is that you really want? Do you want to be  
a golfer because you think that's the only way to really  
get ahead in life, or do you want to be a golfer because  
you really enjoy the sport?

Who are you? What is at the core of your  
identity? My belief system informs me of a fact that has

the deepest significance for The Offer. As a being with a specific identity, I perceive that I possess an eternal durability and special significance to the universe both in my life and also even after death. I believe that there is an existence after death where there is some sort of continuity between what we are experiencing now and whatever “life” follows. In my belief system, this life after death is called the “resurrection”. The Gospel stories inform us of a Jesus who came back from the dead with the ability to walk through walls, appear and disappear instantaneously, and otherwise behave as some sort of God-man, an immortal being with powers even exceeding the miraculous ones described in the stories about his life before his crucifixion. I believe I will receive a similar glorified and eternal body somehow and at some time after my death. I admit that I am uncertain about the specifics.

The exact details about the eternal being or personage that I will inhabit for eternity are unknown to me now. I understand from my source text that there is supposed to be a “ministry of reconciliation”, where all the things that appear broken now will be made new, and that we have will have mansions prepared for us in heaven. I’m OK with living in a mansion. Honestly, I

could be happy in an apartment as long as I have quick access to a sunny beach. You can have my mansion in the snowy mountains of heaven if that would be your dream place to live. Give me the beach.

There are multiple passages in the Bible about how God is our provider. The most famous is Psalm 23:

The LORD, my shepherd, is, I, nothing, lack.  
Me, downwards lie in pastures, green, he makes.  
The quiet waters, he leads me beside,  
my soul refreshed. Along the paths, those right,  
he guides me for his name's sake. Though I walk  
the valley, through it, e'en that one most dark,  
I will no evil, fear, for you're with me;  
your rod and staff are comforting to me.  
Before me, there, a table, you prepare,  
my enemies, a place where they're aware.  
My head with oil, anoint, that's what you do;  
it overflows, my cup. For surely, your  
love, goodness, both of them will, me, pursue  
all of the days of my life, and I will,  
fore'er in heaven in the LORD's house, dwell.

There are many different belief systems, and the final thing that I would note about mine is that its central figure, Jesus, placed a lot of emphasis on something that he called the "church". I spent a lot of time in church Sunday mornings, and Sunday and Wednesday evenings. I spent so much time in churches growing up that I developed a natural aversion to them

now. Now I participate in the Chinese home church movement. I am blessed to be part of that community and other communities that are related to my beliefs. My community relates to the question of The Task about where I can best serve.

Because my belief system places such an emphasis on communities (churches), it has a special significance for the question of The Task, where can you serve? If you are wanting to dedicate yourself to your belief system, that may reflect that you have a desire for strong internal consistency. Internal logical consistency is a strong predictor of long-term economic growth, because that consistency can help you create systems. Systems can be implemented mindlessly to generate cash independently of your effort (businesses that you own, and that other people can work on). Systems can project you on a course of growth.

If you have a strong faith-based system, I encourage you to identify if there is a community that is affiliated with your faith. If so, that may be an excellent place to serve. Alternatively, it may not be. I recommend several other worthy charitable organizations in this book, including ones that Real Advisers directly supports.

As an alternative to an existing community, you could create your own. In Chapter 12 entitled “Your Focus”, I describe how I and some friends formed a tax exempt, woman-led nonprofit corporation, Merciful Gardener Foundation Inc. The charitable purpose of MGF is to house and feed the poor on a sustainable basis. I serve on the three-person Board of Directors of MGF along with our President, Amanda Raby, and another of our friends, Caitlin Austin. (Amanda is a phenomenally talented vocal artist and magician and created covers for my Chalm poetry books.) This is a little community of people outside my belief system, but they certainly are informed of my belief system through the name of the corporation. In fact, our name pays homage to the story from Luke’s Gospel about the parable of the merciful gardener. Chalm’s version is here:

The gardener who in the vineyard works,  
one day its owner asked him to explain:  
“The past three years, I come here seeking fruit.  
This fig tree from production still abstains.

“Why should it waste the precious dirt this way?  
I’m now suggesting that you cut it down.”  
Instead, proposing this alternative,  
the dresser of the vines described its ground:

“Sir, one more year, the soil around its roots.  
Aeration, and manure I will apply.  
If once again, no fruit appears next year,  
I’ll cut it down, throw it into the fire.”

I love this parable (and poem) and the emphasis on the notion of the “merciful gardener”. His seeking mercy for the unproductive fig tree gives me a message of eternal hope about the possibility of redemption for not only my life but for everyone’s. No matter the many mistakes I made in my life, there is always the possibility for forgiveness.

Another way to say it is that there is always the possibility for overcoming the bad karma that you build up for yourself. You must take specific action, and frequently exercise great humility. In doing so, though, you will reveal to yourself the cognitive biases that impair your ability to trend in the direction of wealth accumulation. You also will be exercising the love that the universe has for you and that I believe it desires that we share with one another. I make the argument elsewhere that serving your community in humility is actually in your own best interests. I hope you become convinced of that as you read this book.