

## So What is the Difference...?

So what is the difference between an economic reward system and a bribe. This is not as black and white as it might seem. I have heard some people say that an allowance is a bribe. In wikipedia it mentions that in some cultures it is considered a bribe to leave a tip at a restaurant. Everyone who earns a salary, bonus, or commission experiences money as a reward system. So when does it become a bribe?

In the U.S. we traditionally think of bribes as an offering of money that supports an unethical act. For instance, if someone offered a police officer money to ignore a crime being committed. Another example might be if a corporate executive was offered money to ignore product findings that could harm the public. I think we could all agree that these are clear examples of bribes. What about a boss offering a quarterly bonus plan to his/her employees? Is that a bribe? Is it a bribe to offer your children an allowance for doing chores?

I recently heard that if money is being offered for general expected behavior then it is a bribe. I want ask the question then, is it a bribe to get paid by your company for general expected behavior? I receive a salary and commissions for general expected behavior in my position. Is that a bribe? As humans we experience intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It would be wonderful if the world only functioned based on intrinsic qualities, such as for the joy of working. However, the truth is that this is not how our society functions. Even our pastors receive compensation. I wonder how many pastors would be leading churches if they had to do it for free.

Our society is built on economic structures, as are all societies. Whether bartering products or exchanging currency, it is economic systems that allow us to fairly exchange talents and resources. So let me ask you, if your child receives an allowance for contributing their talents and resources, is it a bribe? Or is a bribe more directly tied to the ethical motive behind the exchange of currency and products. I will agree that there are intrinsic values, such as manners that need to be taught beyond the confines of an allowance or reward system. Treating people with love and grace is beyond extrinsic reward. It is commanded by God, therefore should be followed. In fact our own society will fine people economically for not following particular social expectations.

On the other hand, we must teach our children that reward for their effort has value. After all this is how they will make a living in life. They should receive their reward with grace and humility. They need to learn to give as gracefully as they receive. I believe that as parents if we do not teach our children these principles we are the ones at fault. Prepare your children for the real world. Reward systems are part of the real world, therefore we need to teach them to earn and handle those rewards with grateful hearts.

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