The "lie question"

When I was in College, nearly 50 years ago, my psychology professor had the whole class take a personality assessment test. Several of the questions in this were called "lie questions," the purpose of which was to determine whether the test subject was answering truthfully all of the questions on the test. They were all "forced choice" questions, meaning that only a "yes," or "no" answer was permitted. You couldn't answer "maybe," or "most of the time," or "most probably," and so on.

Here is one of the lie questions: "If you were passing by a movie theatre showing a movie you really wanted to see, and you were able to walk into the movie unseen, without buying a ticket, would you do so?" The presumption was that most people would walk in, without paying, under those circumstances. Well, I answered "no" to the question. I did not answer truthfully. I gave what I believed was the "best" or "right" answer, but it was not the truthful one. Well, if I had answered untruthfully to enough of those cleverly disguised "lie questions," then the results of the test would have been nullified and thrown out. The presumption was that if I answered the "lie questions" untruthfully, I was probably answering many of the other questions untruthfully, as well.

If I were to take the same test again today, I would be able to "truthfully" answer "no" to the same question. There are two reasons for this. First, the cost of admission, at this point in my life, is trivial. Second, and most important, regardless of the cost of admission, purchasing a ticket is the right thing to do, and I am able to fully empathize with the owner and employees of the theatre. They deserve to earn a fair return/wage on their investment of time and money into that business. I was a business owner myself for many years, and I now know how hard it is to succeed in any business. I have also been cheated and swindled out of some pretty large sums of money in my earlier years. On many occasions I was cheated by men who presented themselves to me as ardent Christians. About twelve years ago, despite the best of intentions, and a lot of very hard work, I went through an utterly humiliating bankruptcy, which was the result of many bad financial decisions. I know what it's like to be on the receiving end of business failure and financial loss.

Since then, I have made a remarkable financial recovery, due, in no small part, to the lessons I learned from those previous failures and losses. My relationship with God is also much stronger as a result of those struggles.

Would the moral and ethical decisions you make in life be different if you knew no one was watching, not even God? If you knew for absolute sure that Heaven, Hell, and God did not exist, would you still be the same loving, kind and generous person that you are currently (cough, choke)? I know this is counterintuitive, but might there be some benefit to having the freedom to make decisions in life without feeling like God is watching over you, rewarding you for every good thing you do and punishing you for every wrong choice you make? I believe that God loves us unconditionally, and will "save" us all, regardless of how good or bad we are. It is all based on grace, which I would define as "underserved" love. There is absolutely no room for boasting. This does not mean that we do not pay a price for our misdeeds. God does give us the freedom to suffer, as well as enjoy, the earthly consequences of our actions. The reason He gives us this

freedom is that we may learn from those experiences and become better able to empathize with those who are less fortunate than ourselves. The life we live in the flesh is like a "crucible" or "furnace" by which we are refined and purified. All of God's judgments have the purpose of cleansing us from sinful attitudes and behavior

I am here to tell you that God does not want you to be good because He is standing over you with rewards in one hand and a club in the other. He wants you to be good because you have become a genuinely good person on the inside.