



## The Collector

I am a collector. Over the years, I have accumulated a lot of stuff. (Others may call it junk.) Some things have sentimental value, such as the wooden cigar box guitar my father made as a boy or the chipped "Love Conquers All" plaque that hung on my grandfather's living room wall. However, most of my stuff is simply made up of things that I thought I had to have — do not ask me why.

As I grow older, my collection does not seem as important anymore. For the first time, the adage, "You can't take it with you," is hitting home. When I leave this earth, my lifetime of treasures will stay behind. They will be split between my surviving relatives or, worse yet, heaped into the nearest dumpster. I have come to realize that the only things I will take with me are the things stored in my heart.

So, I've started a new collection. This one takes up a lot less space and I never have to dust it or polish the tarnish. I have started collecting the smiles on a shut-in's face when I pay him a visit; the gratitude of a young child when I give her my time, and the tender hugs from nursing home residents as I bend down beside their wheelchair to chat.

Sometimes, when I am all alone, I marvel at the treasures of my heart and give thanks for every opportunity God has given me to perform, a simple act of kindness. When I do, I add to my collection and store up the rich reward of His joy in my soul. *N. Gilliam*



