

The Gifts of God

James 1:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

In the days of the Bible, times of great joy were often accompanied by the giving of gifts, one to another.

Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Esther 9:22 (NIV)

²² as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. He wrote them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

This ancient custom, practiced commonly in all nations throughout history, finds its greatest expression today at Christmas time.

Remember Jesus was not born on the 25th December. But we celebrate his coming to save us from our sins.

The joy of the wise men and the joyful tidings of the angels echo in millions of family circles around the world.

Even where Jesus is not known, people share the joy of giving.

The Gift of Creation

But we need to understand that giving began with God!

Human gifts are imperfect often wrongly motivated, frequently unappreciated, always defective and temporary.

Gifts that are good gifts and perfect gifts come only from God.

The universe itself, as it came from the creative hand of God the great Giver, was good and perfect.

In fact, if we read in Genesis, God pronounced it "very good" and then "rested," having "finished" (that is, "perfected") everything He had created and made.

God began with a good and perfect creation and He has maintained that standard, because God does not change like the shifting shadows.

Both He and His creation remain forever.

Into this perfect creation, however, appeared an intruder, By man came sin, and then came the great Curse, and now the whole creation is under the bondage of decay.

Romans 8:20-22 (NIV)

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

But with God there is no changing.

Therefore - every gift from God is still a good gift and a perfect gift!

Not only was His created world perfect, but so also is His inspired Word.

And it is from His Word that we see other gifts.

The Other Gifts of God

Our purpose here does not require a comprehensive study of the **Biblical theme of giving**, but we can examine the specific gifts of God that are listed in the Bible.

There are eight times when the phrase "gift of God" occurs in the Bible, with the plural "gifts of God" occurring once.

In the **Old Testament**, the emphasis is on God's **material blessings**, with the only two references being found in Ecclesiastes.

But beware; we cannot take personal pride in our own abilities or our own possessions!

They are gifts of God's grace.

Spiritual blessings are far more important than physical and material blessings, however, and all six of the New Testament occurrences of this phrase, the "gift of God," emphasize these.

6 Spiritual Blessings from God

These six New Testament gifts of God are listed below in order as we trace them sequentially through the New Testament.

1. The Gift of Christ Himself

John 4:10 (NIV)

¹⁰ *Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."*

2. The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:18-20 (NIV)

¹⁸ *When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹ and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."*

²⁰ *Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy **the gift of God** with money!"*

3. The Gift of Eternal Life

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

4. The Gift of Individual Personal Abilities

1 Corinthians 7:7 (NIV)

⁷ *I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.*

5. The Gift of Salvation through Faith

Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

6. The Gift of Confident Love

7. 2 Timothy 1:6-7 (NIV)

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

The Permanence of God's Gifts

If all of the gifts of God are good and perfect, it is no surprise that they are eternal because God does not change.

And this is significant - the sole occurrence of the plural "gifts of God" stresses a wonderful truth.

Romans 11:29 (NIV)

²⁹ for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. (without repentance)

Every one of these gifts of God will be ours to treasure throughout eternity.

The last mention of giving in the Bible has to do with the rewards which Jesus will give His faithful servants at his return.

Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

¹² "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

God is the great Giver, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation!

As we share once again at Christmas, the joy of giving gifts to those we love, let's be sure to remember the God has given the greatest of all His good and perfect gifts.

John 3:16 (NIV)

¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he **gave** his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

And after contemplating God's great gift and the love that determined it, we can respond only in praise and wonder:

2 Corinthians 9:15 (NIV)

¹⁵ *Thanks be to God for his **indescribable gift!***

Amen