

The Gifts We Give



Christopher News Notes

“Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

—2 Corinthians 9:7

SCRIPTURE SPEAKS CLEARLY ABOUT GIVING—and the way we ought to give: generously, completely, quietly, and with love, even when it is most difficult. Giving is at the core of human relationships and enriches the human experience. When it involves the gift of self, it brings joy to the recipient and giver alike.

In the words of a famous prayer widely attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, “It is in giving that we receive.” The rewards of giving are like a hundred-fold return on an investment, for when one person gives, two people reap the rewards. Giving brings with it deeper relationships, gratitude, satisfaction, joy, laughter, and love. It also gives us a glimpse of God in human guise.

To Give of Yourself...

- **Give time.** Visit an aged neighbor; read a story to a child; volunteer at a soup kitchen or emergency shelter.
- **Give of your own gifts.** If you are a good cook, prepare a meal for a shut-in; if you have a green thumb, make cuttings of your favorite plants to brighten a co-worker’s desk; if you are skilled with a camera, make a family scrapbook for a relative.
- **Give commitment.** Keep promises to friends and relatives; make an effort to be punctual; seek a cause beyond yourself (the homeless, the needy, a literacy program) and volunteer on a long-term basis.
- **Give energy.** Take a group of youngsters to a museum; surprise a parent by washing the car unexpectedly; mow the lawn of an elderly neighbor; do the shopping for a new mother.
- **Give support.** Volunteer for a crisis hotline; assist in a teen counseling program at a local school; help a friend through a difficult time.
- **Give prayer.** Pray for those closest to you, for those in ministry, for those who are suffering; form a prayer group and welcome newcomers; give thanks often to God, the Giver of all gifts, for each and every blessing.
- **Give love.** Forgive someone who has wronged you; treat others as you would like to be treated.

Gifts Worth Giving

Gift-giving is unlimited in scope when it is seen as a boundless opportunity to show love for others. It is then that giving takes on deeper meaning, lifting both the recipient and the giver to a higher level of friendship and love.

The Ultimate Gift

It is good to remember that God cannot be outdone when it comes to giving. As John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Jesus Himself was a gift—and giving was the essence of His ministry. Jesus, of course, gave the ultimate gift—His life. In so doing, He reminds us that there is really no limit to giving, that giving is ordinary, the very stuff of daily life, not something to be reserved for special occasions. Jesus cleansed the leper, gave sight to the blind, expelled demons from the possessed. He comforted the bereaved, fed the multitudes, and forgave sins. But most importantly, when Jesus gave His life as a gift, He gave to each of us the gift of life everlasting.

- **The gift of affection.** People need signs from their loved ones that they, too, are loved. Hugs, kisses, handshakes, or a pat on the back demonstrate the love in your heart and leave the recipient feeling warm and wanted. A letter from Ophelia Collins of Ohio reveals the impact of a gift of affection: “I live alone in a mobile home...and travel to church once a week. On my 78th birthday, one of the gentlemen from the congregation gave me a dozen pink roses. How I loved those roses and their beautiful scent! The young man who gave me the roses will never know the joy his gift brought me. I felt so loved and so young.”
- **The gift of a letter.** Simple or detailed, a letter to a loved one is a written reminder of one’s support, friendship, or presence—and can be treasured long after it is received. Marie Carrano of the Bronx read of a lonely, elderly woman who never received a letter from a friend or relative. Mrs. Carrano wrote to this woman. That was the beginning of a service that led her to reach out to more than 700 lonely people.
- **The gift of service.** Service entails the gift of time and talent, and may often call for a gift of energy and endurance. Former teacher Hildred M. Chevront knows it doesn’t take a lot of money to help others. At age 81, she still served as a Red Cross volunteer, offering rides to the hospital to the sick and picking up prescriptions for the elderly. “The secret to health is to keep

going and to keep helping,” she said.

- **The gift of life.** One can offer another the gift of life itself in various ways. As a child, Josephine Whitmire of Tunnel Hill, Georgia, dreamed about becoming a doctor. But at age 14, she died as the result of a car accident. In death, however, she still managed to serve life. With her family’s consent, her heart, liver, kidneys, and eyes were given to others. “Others have been given new leases on life because of Josephine’s gift,” said her mother.

Creative Giving

Gift-giving invites creativity. In the words of Pierre Corneille, a French dramatist. “The manner of giving is worth more than the gift.” Here are some creative gifts others have given:

- Phil Buchacher of San Francisco was so weakened by AIDS, he was unable to work and faced the loss of his salary and benefits when he needed them most. An inventive gift from his co-workers spared him such hardship. They forfeited 936 hours of their own vacation time to keep him on the payroll for five additional months. “We thought there had to be another way to help him besides sending him a card,” said one donor.
- Marian Beach was known for baking, sculpting, and decorating birthday cakes for children’s parties at the Colorado Christian Home in Denver, which houses youngsters suffering from emotional disorders. Because “no two children are alike,”

she said, "no two cakes I bake are alike." Asked if she would ever stop giving to the children, she replied, "Only when my hand shakes and I can't draw a straight line."

- Multimillionaire Eugene Lang of New York City offered a gift of commitment, generosity, and surprise to 61 sixth graders at Public School 121 in Harlem during a commencement speech to the class. Lang stunned the students when he told them that if they remained in school, he would pay their college tuition. Additionally, he promised to personally help students with their studies if they needed it. "I don't like to see a bridle put on the human spirit," said Lang. "This is a gift that will help unleash the obstacle."
- Louisville auto dealer Don Corlett responded to a presidential call to the private business sector to give more to the needy by donating used cars. With the cooperation of the Kentuckiana Interfaith Community (KIC), an ecumenical agency, Corlett gave trade-ins and leftover cars to needy individuals and organizations. "It's good to see a businessman taking his responsibility to give back to the system seriously," said the KIC director.
- Margaret Barnard of Bloomington, Minnesota, knew her grandson wanted to earn a bachelor's degree in English, even though he had cerebral palsy and needed assistance in every aspect of daily life. For five years, the 70-year-old woman helped her grandson dress, attend class, and take notes and tests. The young man earned his

degree with a B-plus average.

- To raise funds for various charities, John Buscher of Hawthorne, New York, collected discarded bottles and cans and returned them for their deposit. In 18 months, the youngster raised more than \$1,400. Although collecting was often tiresome and cost him time with his friends, John said he never minded. "I was thinking that I was doing it for others. It made the work worthwhile."

Giving to God

Scripture tells us that giving to God is best embodied in serving others, in sacrifice and thanksgiving.

- **Service.** The opportunities for giving of self through service are endless, whether one would like to provide the service through an established agency, or on a one-to-one basis with a handicapped person, an elderly neighbor, or a new mother. "Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap," Paul told the Galatians. "So then," he added, "as we have opportunity, let us do good to all." (Gal 6:9-10)
- **Sacrifice.** Self-giving involves a fidelity to truth, even when it is most difficult. "He who believes in Me will also do the works that I do," said Jesus in John 14:12. There are gifts to be given to individuals and to society, for instance, in overcoming the lie of racism, the lie of drugs, or the lie of materialism, although these may not be easy things to do. But to do them is to do the works of which Jesus speaks.
- **Thanksgiving.** We come to a deeper understanding of God's love for His people when we remember to give the gift of thanks directly to God for even the smallest of blessings. "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever," the psalmist wrote (Ps. 107:1).
"Whatever you do, in word or deed," said Paul, "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."


**"It's better to light one candle
than to curse the darkness."**

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