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## Is Jesus The Perfect Gift?

The Scripture “It’s better to give than to receive” was put under scientific test.

Credible institutions such as Harvard Business School and University of California have run studies and tests and found what happens when we choose to give rather than receive.

- **Giving Makes Us Feel Happy** – the researchers found giving money lifted participant’s happiness more than spending it on themselves.
- **Giving is Good For Our Health** – A professor of preventative medicine reported that giving to others has been shown to increase health benefits in people with chronic illness, including HIV and multiple sclerosis.
- **Giving Promotes Cooperation & Social Connection** – Sociologists have suggested that when you give to others, your generosity is likely to be rewarded by others down the line and these exchanges strengthen our ties to others.
- **Giving evokes gratitude** – whether you’re on the giving or receiving end of a gift, that gift can elicit feelings of gratitude. And research has found that gratitude is integral to happiness, health and social bonds.
- **Giving is Contagious** – when we give we don’t only help the immediate recipient of our gift. We also spur a ripple effect of generosity through our community. One study by University of California found that when one person behaves generously, it inspires observers to behave generously later, toward different people. As a result each person in a network can influence dozens or even hundreds of people, some of whom he or she does not know and has not met.

The Bible clearly describes Jesus as a gift.

## **Read**

Isaiah 9:6

John 3:16-17

Is the gift of Jesus the perfect gift?

According to psychologists, sociologists and philosophers there are certain qualities that make a gift perfect.

### **1. A Perfect Gift Comes From Observation**

To give the perfect gift you have to have mastered the art of paying attention to what friends and loved ones say and what their interests are.

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What did God observe about the world? He noticed:

- People were in slavery to sin and the ongoing effects and weight of sin, ultimately sin leading to death (**Romans 6:23**)
- He saw people condemned, burdened, weary and exhausted by shame and guilt, needing forgiveness and true peace of mind and heart (**Acts 3:19-20**)
- He saw because of sin people were like orphans, not having any true permanent place in a family (**John 8:54**)
- He saw people being accused, deceived and destroyed by the plans of Satan, the father of this world (**1 Timothy 4:13**)
- He observed that no sacrificial offering of bulls and goats could take away the reminder of sins (**Hebrews 10:3-4**)
- Above all He observed people needed A Redeemer, a Saviour, A Healer, An Advocate and a Friend. He saw the people needed a God they could relate to, not some pie in

the sky concept but one who was compassionate and understanding of what they go through. (Hebrews 2:17-18)

*“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:17-18)*

God did observe what people needed and He provided Jesus.

## **2. A Perfect Gift is Planned**

Gifts that communicate love are not your last minute ideas – like socks and jocks (even if they are something the person may need).

Generally what makes a perfect gift is that it has been thought through and planned out. In other words time and effort has gone into the gift.

Is Jesus Plan A or B?

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*1 Peter 1:20 - God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but he has now revealed him to you in these last days. (NLT)*

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The Old Testament contains 353 messianic prophecies which have already been fulfilled. That means you can read through prophecies in the Old Testament that foretold about Jesus.

Genesis 3:15 when God speaks to the serpent and says:

*“I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel. (HCSB)*

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Six scriptures speak of the fulfillment of this scripture. See Hebrews 2:14-15 as an example.

Other prophecies include:

Isaiah 7:14 and was fulfilled Luke 1.

Jesus was not a last minute idea, He was perfectly planned.

### **3. A Perfect Gift Calls On the Giver To Make A Sacrifice**

Sacrifice doesn't mean you pawn the bracelet you inherited from your mother to pay some substantial amount on a gift.

According to psychologists sacrifice is not always about financial sacrifice.

Sacrifice could be putting aside time that you would spend on yourself to find a gift.

*Philippians 2:5-8 – Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the*

*likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death – even to death on a cross. (NIV)*

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*John 10:18 - No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded." (NIV)*

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#### **4. The Giver of a Perfect Gift wishes “to please the recipient”.**

A perfect gift is not about having strings attached and expecting something in return. The perfect gift doesn't beg for reciprocation. “For example I have given you this gift and I expect this in return”. That's not a gift that's a transaction.

The perfect gift is about pleasing the recipient and allowing them to be free with the gift.

St Thomas Aquinas an Italian Dominican friar in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, also a philosopher and theologian, studied the theology of gift giving and he believed that a gift can't be given “with strings attached”, that it shouldn't be disguised as a form of controlling the other, but rather the freeing of the other for enjoyment of the gift received.

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*John 1:11-12 – He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name ... (HCSB)*

The gift of Christ is freely given to all people and we can choose to engage with the gift or not. Christ is perfectly gracious and loving in giving people the choice to choose Him or not.

## **CONCLUSION**

And as we get closer to Christmas, as we wrap presents or open presents let's remember

*James 1:17 (NIV)*

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