

# Every Perfect Gift

 “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above...”  
— James 1:17 NRSV

## What is the best gift you have ever received?

I have been asked this question throughout my life by many people in different contexts. Possible answers to a parent or a teacher could be a new walkie-talkie set (these were the Seventies), a bike, a horseback ride with my grandmother, or when I was a teenager, a jeep in the driveway with a big red bow on it. Later it could have been my education, a chance to study abroad, canoeing with my dad on a quiet river, making Christmas cookies with my mom.

## Every Perfect Gift

What did these perfect gifts give me, aside from the pleasure of the possession? **They each taught me about living in the moment**, appreciating what I had - whether it was long afternoons playing “secret agent” in the backyard with my best friend and our walkie-talkies, or singular moments like listening to the sound of the current of a river on a quiet summer afternoon with my father. They also taught me generosity, for the delight I had in experiencing the gifts called me to share such moments and experiences with others. **This is the relationship between receiving and generosity, and it’s a pattern, that, once it takes root in us, continues in perpetuity.** The more we practice generosity, the more abundance we recognize around us.

## Every Generous Act

In many congregations it is the practice to sing the Doxology as our gifts — the elements of the Eucharist and our offerings — are brought to the altar for blessing. “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,” it begins; and these words remind us of the font from which springs all generosity, all love, all gift. We are called in that moment to reflect on this cycle of abundance sparked with the first light and made manifest in the Creation, in the calling of prophets, and in the gift of God’s own son on Earth. **As we share our gifts through the Eucharist and through our service to the world, we participate in the ongoing creation of abundance and generosity.**

## What is the best gift you have ever received?

The theme and image for *Every Perfect Gift* are wrapped in the metaphor of the butterfly and chrysalis. Of all the metaphors of gift that could be used, why did we decide on this one?

To the ancient Greeks, the butterfly represented the image of rebirth and freedom. The word they used for butterfly was *psyche*, and if you are thinking that sounds familiar, you are correct! It also means spirit. The humble and beautiful butterfly contains the philosophical and spiritual idea of the soul breaking free from its shell — free to **discover, to inspire, to create, to communicate, to share.**

These are also spiritual gifts, gifts that when we free ourselves to serve in the world, we need and share with others; and they are gifts of our stewardship. **As we share our time, talent, and treasure with our church and with the world, we unleash those same gifts in our communities: discovery, inspiration, creativity, communication, sharing.** Through the ministries that are enabled by our gifts, the inspiration we show to our neighbors to unlock their generosity in the world, and the stories we tell about ourselves and our experiences, we participate with God in an abundant vision for the world. **Every perfect gift comes from God above.**

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