

The Gift of
Blessing



The Gift of Blessing

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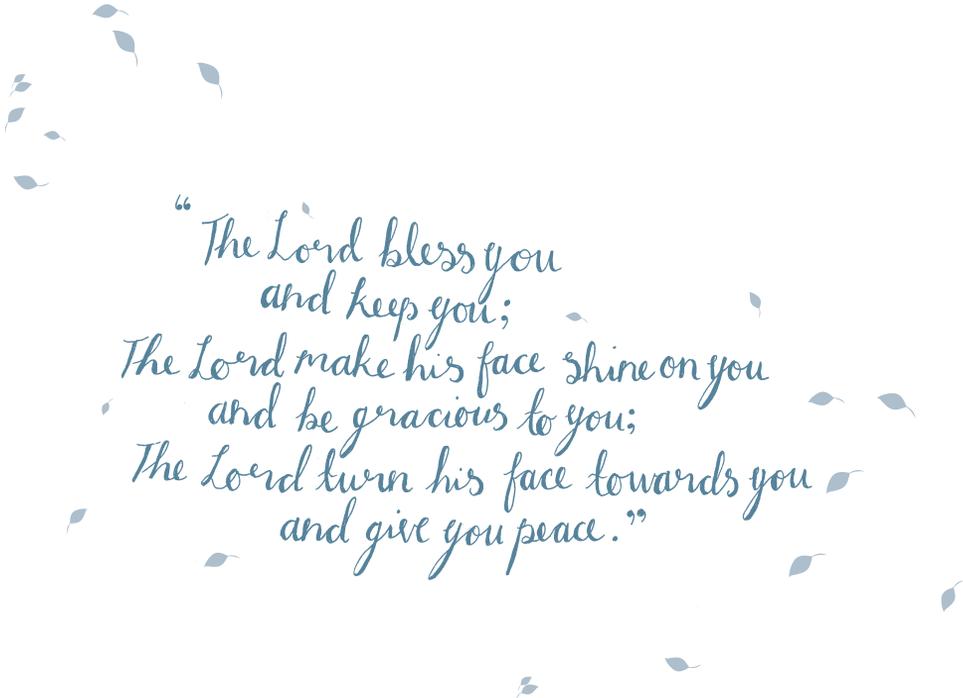


DEDICATION

To all my wonderful family and friends who have brought us God's love in tangible ways as we have grieved the loss of Trevor. We have been, and are being, carried by the hugs, cakes, flowers, meals in and out, food parcels, texts, calls, precious cards, gifts and above all your prayers.

And especially to Johnny, Connor and Ben –
you are an ongoing gift of blessing to me.



A decorative border of small, dark green leaves is scattered around the text, primarily on the left and right sides, framing the central quote.

“The Lord bless you
and keep you;
The Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
The Lord turn his face towards you
and give you peace.”

PREFACE

This book, *The Gift of Blessing* grew out of *The Promise of Blessing*, which was written in 2015. We heard that after reading straight through the *Promise* book, people had then started praying over it a page at a time, so it seemed a natural step to make it into a devotional book.

The Gift of Blessing was put together in a time of joy after celebrating 25 years of marriage, but just after I completed it, my husband, Trevor, unexpectedly died. I have been carried through the past months by the truth that God is ever present – in the desert, in the storm and especially beside a coffin. Though my eyes have sometimes been too full of tears to see the Father’s face, I have found that he is close to the broken-hearted. I am so grateful for all the ways that he has shown his care for us.

In whatever state of life you find yourself as you open up *The Gift of Blessing*, whether it is joy or sorrow, my prayer is that you will meet the one who is unswerving in his desire to bless you and keep you, to make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, to turn his face towards you and give you his peace.

God’s gift of blessing is for you, a gift more precious than any other gift you will ever receive. It will never go out of fashion or need upgrading; it is a gift of transformation. The source of all blessing makes us like himself – a blessing to those around us.

“Lord make your face shine upon us that we may shine with you.”



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THE PROMISE OF BLESSING



Would you be surprised to discover that there is a promise of blessing for you?

The shining blessing of Numbers 6 is a gift from God to all his people – and that includes you. There are many blessings recorded in the Old Testament but this is the only one which comes directly from God himself. He asked his priests to pray it over his people and they have done so for centuries. God loves to bless those who turn to him.

Blessing is God's idea – it's the first thing that he did when he made Adam and Eve and it's the last thing that Jesus did before he ascended into heaven. Just as any good father wants his children to thrive, God loves you and wants to bless you. As John Newton's hymn, *Amazing Grace*, so beautifully puts it,

*The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;*



Today, God wants to shine his loving face upon you to light up your life and he gives you the wonderful words of this blessing in Numbers 6 as a gift.

*'The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face towards you
and give you peace.'*

God is inviting you to dwell in his blessing. Don't rush. Take your time and pray it over and into your life and the lives of those around you.



The Lord

The text "The Lord" is written in a dark blue, elegant cursive font. The letters are fluid and connected, with a classic, slightly formal feel. Surrounding the text are several light blue, stylized leaf motifs. These leaves are scattered around the words, some appearing to be part of a branch or stem that weaves through the letters. The leaves have a simple, rounded shape with a small stem and vein, giving the overall design a soft, natural, and decorative appearance.

bless you

The text "bless you" is written in a dark teal, cursive script. It is surrounded by several light blue, stylized leaf motifs of varying sizes and orientations, scattered around the text.

Trusting the blessing

If we don't trust that God wants to bless us, we will be like millionaires in rags. If we live life expecting nothing of God, our heads will be down and we will miss what he has for us.

God wants each of us to have a rock-like certainty that we never need to twist his arm when it comes to blessing. He wants to build in you and me the breathtaking confidence of King David, who could boldly declare,

*Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,*

PSALM 23:6

God is not a grumpy old man who measures out blessing in measly thimblefuls. From the start, the enemy of our souls has constantly broadcast the lie that God doesn't want the best for us, and it is only too easy to tune into that wavelength. Choose to listen to the truth that God will never withhold his love from you.



“Thank you, my loving Father, for your unfailing
love and your promise to bless me.”



THE GIFT OF SHALOM

All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

Many people envisage the blessed life as a holiday in the Bahamas, but the Bible has a richer definition: the ancient Hebrew word *shalom*, a rich word which means well-being, wholeness and health, peace and welcome, home-coming and belonging, truth and justice. It is about *being* not just *having*. It speaks of the deep contentment of a child who is well fed and wrapped up secure in their parent's arms.

King David understood that this deep contentment comes from childlike trust:

*My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quietened myself,
... like a weaned child I am content.*

PSALM 131:1–2

 Read these verses aloud slowly and deliberately.
Entrust all the desires of your heart, the worries of your day
and your greatest hopes to the one who cares for you. 

THE GIFT OF WELL-BEING

*‘The LORD be exalted,
who delights in the well-being of his servant.’*

PSALM 35:27

God DELIGHTS in your well-being. It brings him joy to see you secure, peaceful, thriving and content. That’s why he is always speaking blessing over our lives.

Consider the extraordinary truth that your well-being matters to God. Why?

Because he loves you even more than the very best dad loves his kids.

We can trust this truth even when life is tough. The writer of Psalm 35 was in the midst of difficulty yet still chose to trust that God cared about his well-being. So when it’s hard, join John Piper and preach a sermon to your soul,

Soul, be glad today! Be strong! Look, do you see the greatness of the Lord God Almighty? Do you see the power of the Maker of heaven and earth? Do you see the wisdom and the knowledge of the one who designed the universe and the molecule? Well, hear this and be astounded, little soul: that great God delights in your welfare! Did you hear that, little soul? I said, ‘Delights!’ That’s D-E-L-I-G-H-T-S, DELIGHTS! Your welfare is not his duty; it’s his joy!¹



“O my soul, trust that your Father delights in you.”



THE GIFT OF INTIMACY

*Come near to God
and he will come near to you.*

JAMES 4:8

Intimacy is scary because it means ‘into me see’, yet we desire intimacy because it’s what we were made for. When God first created Adam, the one thing that was ‘not good’ was for man to be alone. Adam celebrated Eve as bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, no barriers, no hidden agendas, no secrets, no shame, no fear. That’s intimacy.

We were created for intimacy with God, to know God and to be known by him, to love and to be loved.

Today, God invites us to live in unbroken communion with him, knowing that he is near all the time. He wants you to know the overwhelming joy of being constantly and deeply loved.

*There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful
than that of a continual conversation with God.²*

Our deepest contentment comes from intimacy with our Maker. If you will quieten your heart to his voice, God is calling you to himself.

 What do you want to tell the one who loves you best? 



THE GIFT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Deep down we know we are destined for more than the dust. Buried deep within our hearts are desires so fierce that no godless universe could ever explain them. Mere survival of the fittest does not begin to satisfy because our blueprint is the imprint of God. We know we want significance; we want to make a difference. That's why God has appointed good works for us to do. The great Creator made us in his image to be fruitful just as he is – to bear lasting fruit (John 15:16).

The way to this fruitfulness is delightful. It comes not from striving but from entering into intimacy with our Maker.



“Loving Saviour, may I remain in you today.”



The gift of God's favour

Jesus began his ministry with words that shatter all our fears that God might not want to bless us. He came 'to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour' (Luke 4:19).

We can mistakenly think that God has favourites – 'good' people, people like Abraham, to whom he said, 'I will bless you.'

But God's blessing is never exclusive. God told Abraham that he would not only bless Abraham but make him a blessing to the whole world! Jesus was born as a descendant of Abraham and the promise was fulfilled.

God's favour always reaches out to draw others in. Blessing from God to us, blessing from God through us: that is the plan.

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

GALATIANS 3:14



“Father, I thank you that you never exclude me.
I am included in your promise of blessing.”





WORDS OF POWER

We know human words have power to savagely wound us or to build us up. How much more power has the word of God? Spoken by the one whose Word propelled the universe into motion, his words of blessing create and restore.

Our God 'calls into being things that were not' (Romans 4:17).

God spoke our universe into existence: from emptiness came a universe that it would take more than 46 BILLION light years to cross! From nothingness came whirling galaxies, spiralling DNA and you and me! But even more wonderful for us is that God's voice can recreate us!

A flaky, foolhardy fisherman named Simon was recreated with a new name, Peter, which means 'the Rock,' and founded the church. Nicodemus, the fearful Pharisee, was reborn and finally stood out as the disciple who had the courage to ask Pilate for Jesus' body. Saul, the Christian-killer was renamed by God as Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. God's word has unlimited power to transform.

**If God speaks over you that you are a new creation, you are made new.
So which voices will you listen to? Voices that tear you down or God's
voice of blessing telling you that you are his beloved child?**



Let the morning bring me
word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my
trust in you.

Psalm 143:8



BLESSING PREVAILS

There is one big question that lingers – if God is so eager to bless us, why is there so much anguish in our world? The Bible begins by telling us that God made a perfect world, which he handed over to our care. When people rejected

God’s rule, it all went askew. Blessing was refused, design marred, intimacy wounded, significance squandered and fruitfulness made barren. Our intimacy with God was abandoned for self-satisfaction, our delegated authority was thrown aside for self-rule and we picked a poisoned fruit in place of eternal fruitfulness. Paradise was lost to us and our ultimate destination proves not to be a neutral no-man’s land but exile into the enemy territory of the curse. That is why Jesus described Satan as ‘the prince of this world’ (John 14:30).

Yet God is so committed to his blessing-plan that he came in Christ to take the curse on himself. Blessing prevails.

With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack? Surely we are the most favoured of all creatures.

A W TOZER, *THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY*



“Father, when I consider how Christ was cursed that I might be blessed, I am overwhelmed by your love. I praise you that you gave all that we might have all.”



THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF CHRIST

*Whom no senses can reveal
Was for us made manifest*

IGNATIUS C. 105 AD

After three years with Jesus, Philip says to him, 'Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.' Jesus answers,

*'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you
such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.
How can you say, "Show us the Father"?'*

JOHN 14:8-9

What a statement! Jesus clearly claims to be God's shining face.

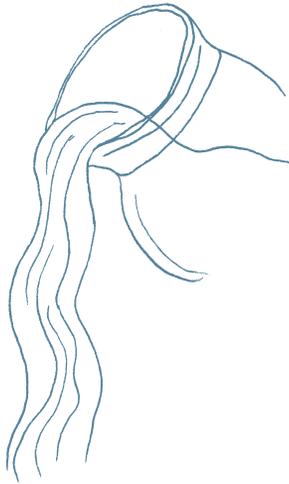
We can see the face of God in Christ and it is always more wonderful than we expected. Jesus likes prayer and parties and picnics on the beach. He cares for the poor and touches the untouchable. He makes friends with fraudsters and prostitutes and intellectuals. He is constantly surprising – to the point of raising the dead. He shows us what God is like.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory

HEBREWS 1:3

How can we see that shining face today? God has given us not only his Word but also his Spirit so that daily we can meet with him.

THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE ON YOU



*'I will no longer hide my face from them,
for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel,
declares the Sovereign LORD.'*

EZEKIEL 39:29

**Think about what you love about Jesus.
Praise God – that's what he is like.**



THE GIFT OF REVELATION

Our God **longs** to make himself known to us.

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son ... has made him known.

JOHN 1:18

C. S. Lewis has the senior demon in *The Screwtape Letters* writing in exasperation about God,

‘To human animals on their knees, He pours out self-knowledge in a quite shameless fashion.’⁵

The key phrase there is ‘on our knees.’ Perhaps it is time we acknowledged that we cannot find God on our own. Iranaeus wrote in the second century that only God can reveal God to us. How did we ever think we could get our little minds around the maker of the universe? As if an ant could access the internet or a microbe could map the stars.

We cannot find him on our own so thank God that he searches tirelessly for those who seek after him. He promises,

‘You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.’

JEREMIAH 29:13



If you can, kneel down before God and tell him that you are seeking him. If you are unable to physically do it, you can make it the attitude of your heart. Thank him for his promise to make himself known to you.



GOD SAYS, ‘SEEK MY FACE!’

Jesus began his guide to blessing in Matthew 5 by stirring up our desire for more; he shows us that blessing starts with acknowledging our need, by being hungry, thirsty and poor.

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.’

MATTHEW 5:3–6

Trust God that the thirst that drew you to read this book is a sign that you are blessed by him. As we connect with our desperate desire to see his face, then we are blessed.

We pray with Augustine,

Lord, put salt on our lips that we may thirst for you.

Here is a prayer that we know God loves to answer. God tells us to seek his face because he longs to make it shine upon us.

‘Jesus, joy of man’s desiring’ waits to be found by us.⁶



“Father, you tell us to seek your face because you long to make it shine upon us. Make me thirsty for you today.”





SETTING BLESSING HIGHEST

'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'

Jacob

GENESIS 32:26

It appears that God's top criterion for blessing is an eagerness to go after it. Why else would God choose to show his face to Jacob of all people? Jacob, the cheat. Jacob, the liar. Jacob, the thief. His name means 'grasper' and he lives up to it. He didn't just steal from strangers, he conned his way into his brother's inheritance.

God showed his face to Jacob because Jacob set blessing above everything else. His methods were terrible, involving conniving, scheming and fancy dress, but, in the end, Jacob is exalted over his brother Esau. All because Jacob valued the Father's blessing while Esau despised it. Esau was prepared to sell off his right to his father's blessing for a bowl of stew. What a warning for us who are too quickly tempted to exchange an eternity of the Father's blessing for a few material advantages here.

It is easily done. Esau looks like a fool to hand over his inheritance to quieten his rumbling tummy, but how often is that scene replayed? Except that the bowl of stew is a brief affair or a dodgy contract at work or even the apparently legitimate distractions of education or ambition or romance. I wonder what distracts you from setting blessing highest?

THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE SHINE ON YOU



What can I do to chase after the Father's blessing on my life?

