

Michael Balcomb of FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: My Gift to God

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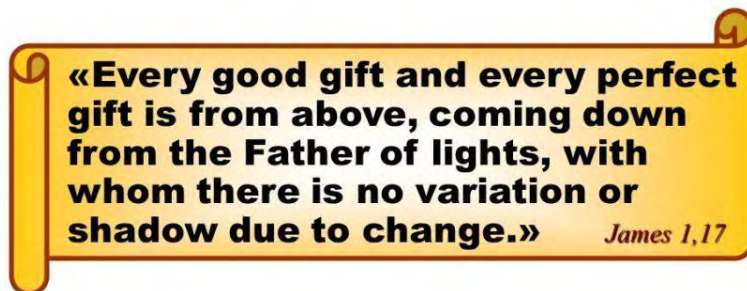


Dr. Michael Balcomb delivering his message 10th December 2023 in London

At a time of giving gifts, what is my gift to God?

Message by Dr. Michael Balcomb, President of the [Family Federation](#) for Europe and the Middle East, given during the Sunday service at the River South Community in London, UK 10th December 2023. Slightly edited version.

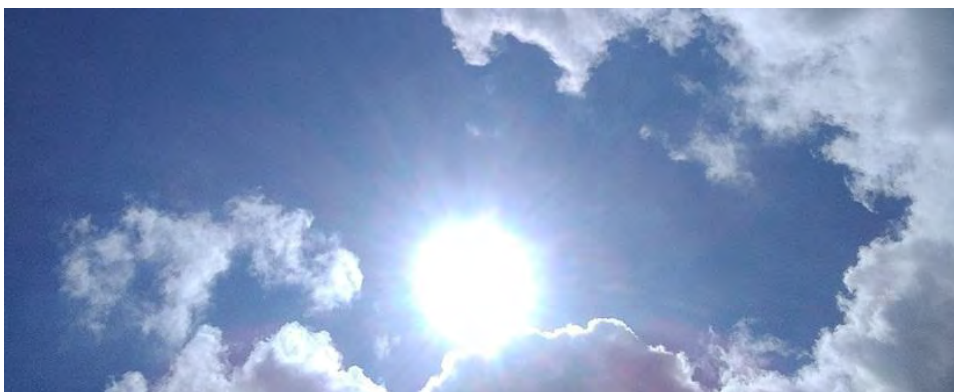
So it's Christmas time, almost, and also that's the time of giving gifts. [...]



Our first reading this morning is from the book of James chapter 1, verse 17,

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Of course, this is from the 1st century, the beginning of Christian history, and the theme of light and darkness was really very common because the Christians were being persecuted. They were being killed. In some places they had to live underground. There was a lot of darkness, and so this image of God, the bringer and giver of light, came.



High noon sun 24th August 2020 at 11.38 am

And I'm also interested in this idea that there's no shadow because as you know, this was a theme in many of [Father Moon](#)'s sermons, that we should live life without shadows. It's only possible to be without shadow when the sun is at high noon, right? In the tropics where I was born, that happened quite many days. But if you live above the tropics, it never happens.

Receiving the gift of God and sharing it

But spiritually we have to think we're going to live a life of high noon. It means that between the light of [God's](#) love and [God's](#) grace, I don't want to have anything in the way. I want to receive the full warmth of the love and the gift of [God](#), and I want to share that with other people. Those two things.

Having a gift is about both giving and receiving. So if you only give gifts and you never receive one, how will you feel? Bad, terrible, unloved, sad.

But what if you receive gifts and you don't give any? You feel worse, right? You feel guilty.

God's gift to us

As we are coming to the end of the year, I wanted to reflect a little bit about the gifts and the giver. And although my sermon title is "My Gift to [God](#)", let's start by thinking about [God's](#) gift to me. [...]

What has [God](#) given to you, this year or any year? It's sweet to hear that some of you say, "My wife!"

The unchanging God



But think about the second part of that quote from [God](#), "with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change".

This means that if [God](#) has given a gift, He's not going to say later on, "I kind of wish I didn't give that gift to those persons. Because they're not really caring for it, they're not really multiplying it."

Now we have to be really sure that if [God](#) has blessed you, [God](#) has blessed you! If [God](#) has called you to a mission, to a task, that call will remain until you fulfill it. He won't take it back, thinking "OK, they're not doing it. I have to choose someone else."

If [God](#) says He needs you, He needs you. If [God](#) says He wants you, He wants you. That's it.

Being [God](#) is a little bit different from being just called to be a pastor. If the pastor says he wants something to happen, he has to talk to the committee. But [God](#) doesn't have any committee to consult. If [God](#) decides something has to happen, it will happen.

So [God](#) is unchanging. [God's](#) love and his purpose for us do not change ever. [God](#) doesn't change his mind.

But what about us? We change our minds so often. [...]

[God](#) didn't change his mind even in the most sorrowful situation, when he lost his children. But we do change our minds quite often. That's one of the biggest challenges at the end of any year, particularly a year like this where there's been so much disruption, chaos.



Return of the Prodigal Son by Guercino (1591-1666)

How did I use my gifts?

We come to a point near the end of the year, and we look back, and we assess ourselves in the light of our conscience. How did I use my gifts this year?

If you're like me, there's a little sting of conscience, sometimes a big sting because you think, "I wasted some of my gifts this year. I squandered the opportunities I had, I don't really feel that I've done all that I could have done."

The good news is that we have 21 days from today until the end of the year, so it's not too late to do something about it. I wouldn't give this sermon on New Year's Eve.

There's time. There is time to use the gifts that we received. There are a lot of stories in the scriptures about people who misuse their gifts. Of course, the most famous one is the prodigal son. You know that story - the father with two sons. The younger son wants all his gifts all at once. And then he goes out and squanders them all, uses them in reckless living and stupid decisions and finally ends up really at the very bottom.

But isn't there a little prodigal in all of us. You know that we have missed opportunities to really do what we can, and sometimes the reason, is because we mistakenly feel that someone else is going to do it.

The talents

Another of my favorite parables concerns the story of the master who gathered his servants and gave to them different gifts. To one he gave five talents. Who knows how much a talent was worth? How much is a talent? Is it a day's salary? No, that was a denarius. Is it a month's salary? A year's? For the average person a talent would be 40 years of earnings.

So imagine you're a servant, and you're given 200 years of salary! But it's not for you. The goal is that you're going to multiply it. Another servant got 2 talents, and the last one got only one.



A depiction of the parable of talents, showing two men bringing their money back to their master, while the third man is digging them up from the ground

And you know the story. The one with five went out and multiplied them and made another five. The one with two multiplied them and made another two. And then the last one, what did he do?

He buried it. He hid it. Why do you think he did that?

Some say he didn't want to suffer the master's anger. True. That's what Jesus said. But I think there's something else as well.

I think he may have thought like this, "Well, I only got one. Somebody else got two, somebody else got five. So if there's any work to be done, they're the ones who are going to be doing it. I obviously don't have much capacity, so I only got one. I'll just bury it.

But when [God](#) gives us gifts, He knows our capacity. He never gives us something that is beyond our ability to bear or to multiply. So if you happen to have received five talents from [God](#), it means that [God](#) expects that you can multiply those five. If you got two, it's not [God](#) being stingy. It's just that [God](#) knows, actually for you two talents are enough. That will be something you can work with.

And if you only got one, it means that [God](#) considers this is what you can handle. Maybe in the future you

can handle more. But today you can handle one. So even if you only got one, you still have to do your very best to share it, to multiply it, to use it.

Absolutely we shouldn't think, "Well, you know, other people have more than this. I'll just retreat and I'll hide it."

That's squandering our gifts.

Giving something back



Congregation shouting and responding to the word of God

So then, let's think about the gifts that we can give in return. Because if [God](#) gives a gift, then it's expected that we'll give something back. And what kind of gift is [God](#) really worth?

In the story of the talents, it wasn't money that the master was looking for. Actually he was trying to find, "Who can inherit my authority? Who can help me to multiply my Kingdom?"

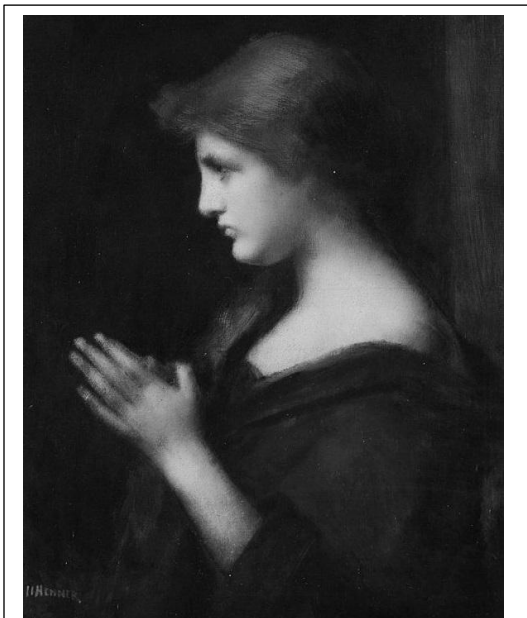
The guy who got five talents and made them into ten, was placed in charge over ten cities. I guess that makes him a governor. It's a very high position to be in charge of ten cities.

God wants to give us so much more

When [God](#) gives us certain gifts, what he's really hoping for, what our Heavenly Parent is looking for is how we respond. Because he wants to give so much more, and he wants to use us so much more.

But what gifts are they? Remember the first scripture we read, says that every good gift comes from the Father of heavenly lights. Your gift may be singing, writing, business, organization, preaching. There are so many different gifts - loving, caring. There are as many gifts as there are people in the world.

Comparing ourselves to others



Young Woman Praying, painting by Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905)

But sometimes we don't even recognize them because we're so caught up looking at other people's gifts, comparing ourselves to others who may be older, younger, more educated, whatever it might be.

And when wasting our time thinking about the gifts other people received, we don't even notice what [God](#) has given us and we feel we may have nothing.

Actually, it's OK if from time to time you feel you really don't have anything to give. In truth, we all visit that space sometime or other.

And it's not necessarily unhealthy because we do also need to be humble and realistic before [God](#), to acknowledge where we're weak and where we fall short. But we shouldn't stay there. We should not stay there!

We have to think, "No, I have received great gifts." Yeah, sometimes we're unaware of them. And we don't appreciate them, or we don't recognize how lucky and

fortunate we are.

How lucky we are!

I think all of us have been watching television the last week, seeing the destruction in Gaza, thinking of those families who have no food, no water, no shelter, no medicine. We have all of those things. We can't say that in this room we are not blessed among all the peoples of the earth.



Dover Castle - view from southeast

And even historically we all live better than kings or queens of previous years. Not so long ago, Fumiko [his wife] and I went to Dover Castle. We thought we were going to have a look and see if it might be a place that we could take our relatives when they come.

When you go into Dover Castle or indeed, any royal castle, you usually get to see where the king - usually it was a king - lived. And the interesting thing is, the king didn't have his own bedroom. No, he might have slept with 40 other people. He had no privacy whatsoever. You ask, "Well, where's the toilet? Where's the bathroom?"

Well, the toilet is a long way away. So is the bathroom - you only took a bath once a month anyway, whether you needed it or not. You realize that even the standard of the King, compared to today, wasn't that great.

If you lived in a house with no toilet, no bathroom, the local Council would come round to see why you are suffering so much."

So historically, we are blessed. Compared to others in the world, we are so blessed. I think it would do us a lot of good as we come towards the end of this year to count those blessings. But not for the sake of comparing with others, but I feel now I really should give something back.

What we give to God



*Father Moon speaking in Japan
14th Oct. 1972*

So my second reading, which comes from [Father Moon](#), talks about what we could give back to [God](#). And this is from a speech that [Father Moon](#) gave a long time ago, 60 years. It's about the gifts that we could offer to [God](#),

"You have many gifts that you would like to offer to [God](#). Even though you have no possession and have empty hands, there is a gift that you can still offer to [God](#). That gift is not something that people enjoy in this world. That gift is prepared through your attitude to stand before Heavenly Father shedding blood, sweat, and tears. That is the best gift you can offer to [God](#) who is a father of suffering, sorrow, and anguish." ("The Best Gift that You Can Offer to [God](#)", a speech [Father Moon](#) gave 12th Feb. 1961, unofficial translation)

Understanding the parental heart

Now, I don't really like to emphasize this point too much because [God](#) is not only the [God](#) of suffering, sorrow and anguish. He's also the giver of all good gifts and blessings and joy.

But if we really love our parents, we need to understand their real heart, right? It doesn't help if you have children who really don't understand how you're thinking. Of course, when they're very young, that's OK. But as your children grow up and mature, you really expect that they'll make the effort to understand what's really on their father's mind, their mother's mind.

And one day the child may recognize this and offers to the parent, "Let me take some of this from you." How happy the parents then would be!

I just heard this morning when I came in this room, that [Mother Moon](#) has directed our international president [Yeong-cheon Song](#) - many of you know him well - to meet one-on-one with each nation and in fact, with each national leader and witnessing [outreach] leaders to talk about our witnessing plan for 2024, how we are going to do better to share the greatest gift of all.

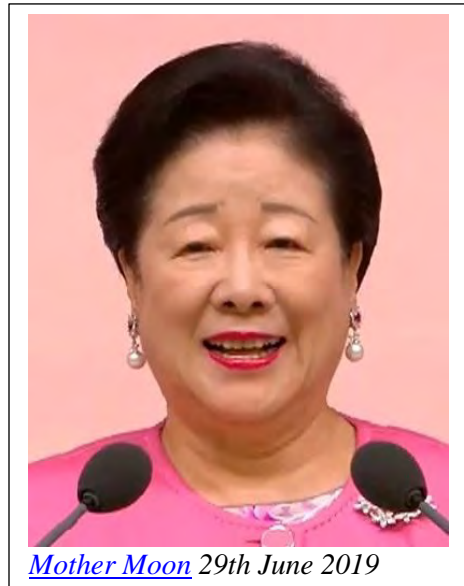
God's final gift to humanity

It's Christmas time, and we're celebrating the gift of Jesus Christ, but according to [Divine Principle](#), in the chapter on the consummation of human history, there is one final gift that [God](#) wants to give to humanity.

What is that? It's the [True Parents](#), because without the [True Parents](#), the family of [God](#), the family of humanity, cannot come back together again, because it was through the loss of [Parents](#) at the time of the Fall, that [God's](#) dream was destroyed.

So the [Parents](#) need to come again, and they're here! They are here!

Sharing the very best gift of all



And [Mother Moon](#) is asking us to share this gift. Actually, the greatest gift that we can give to [God](#), is not material, It's not based on money, or even necessarily just on blood, sweat and tears.

That's an important description of sincerity, but the deepest gift is to let others know we have a Heavenly Parent who is longing to intervene to give the same blessings and gifts that we already have, to the rest of humanity.

And then? As [Father Moon](#) said, this is the very best gift of all. And what about us? Can [God](#) do that by himself? Absolutely not. Who's going to do it? You may think, "Gosh, how lucky it is this morning that our witnessing [outreach] team is right here."

Stand up, witnessing team, please! Give them a round of applause. Thank you.

But can we say, "Oh good, we have a team, so get on with it?" No, I think the biggest gift we could give to [God](#) is to join that team, to join the team of those who will proclaim the news of the Heavenly Parent, the team that I like to call [God's](#) winning team.

It is not over yet, and we don't decide when it's over. We are still called, still full of blessings to give. And let's join the team, [God's](#) winning team, that will share that with our community, nation and world.

"My Gift to [God](#)" - text: Dr. Michael Balcomb

More about gift to God: [God and Human Beings](#)

Even more about gift to God: [The Essence of God](#)

Yet more about gift to God: [Parents and Children](#)

Still more about gift to God: [God's ideal](#)

More about gift to God: [God's Sorrow](#)

More about gift to God: [Suffering of God](#)

More about gift to God: [The Importance of lineage](#)

More about gift to God: [The Kingdom of Heaven](#)

More about gift to God: [True Love](#)

More about gift to God: [The Value of the Family](#)

More about gift to God: [Existence of God](#)

More about gift to God: [Arguments for God](#)



God's Sorrow

God's sorrow immense as He/She searched for the lost children

"I came to know only too well how anguished, aggrieved and full of bitter sorrow was the heart of **God** as He waited for thousands of years to find us.

I realized that if **God**, who is the origin of billions of people and the Creator of everything in the universe, was not relieved from His sorrow, human life would remain completely without value.

When, where and how did **God** come to carry such agonizing sorrow in His heart? Who on earth could inflict this grief upon Him, the absolute and omnipotent Being?

God created Adam and Eve and established them as the first ancestors of humankind. He invested His whole being in raising them as His son and daughter, and they were connected to Him through love, life and lineage.

The parent-child relationship is the highest and most important of all **relationships**, and the only way through which His lineage can be bequeathed and made to last forever.

However, this parent-child relationship, more precious and important than life itself, was severed through the Fall of Adam and Eve.

As **God's** own flesh and blood, and as His eternal, only-begotten son and daughter, Adam and Eve formed a blood relationship with His enemy Satan, and became Satan's children instead.

In the face of this, **God's** heart has been crushed and wounded with grief and sorrow throughout history. This still remains the most mortifying and harrowing anguish, which no one before in history could either know or resolve."

*("God's sorrow" is an excerpt from **Peace Message 2**, delivered by both **Sun Myung Moon** and **Hak Ja Han** in March 2006 and on a global speaking tour to 180 nations the same year.*

***Father** and **Mother Moon** emphasize that it is important for us to understand **God's** sorrow as **God** can only be liberated from it when we start to create the kind of world **God** envisioned from the beginning.)*



Expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Public domain image

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