

10 Gifts That Will Reach Right Down to the Heart

Well friends, the Christmas tree is up, the Nativity is on the mantle, and “O Holy Night” is sounding in our house!

As we enter into this season, I’ve been thinking about what I want to give this year (particularly to my husband). He and I started a little tradition our first year of marriage of making each other a Christmas gift, or at least giving “a gift for the heart.” (Gifts for the heart = those things that will bless, minister to, or grow one’s heart in God in the months and perhaps even years to come.)

Today, just for a little fun, I wanted to share some of my most recent favorite things with you that definitely fall under this bless-the-heart category of gift giving. Not only are they really sweet gifts—they are really sweet gifts that reach a deeper place.

So feel free to take some notes (and maybe drop some hints by passing this post along to friends and family who will be buying *you* gifts :)).

I’ve narrowed it down to 10 ... and here they are, in no particular order. Ready?

1. Art by Bethany Hackmann. This woman’s paintings are rich, and each one is beautifully birthed from the place of prayer and Scripture meditation. As you browse through her work, you will notice a few pictures of children in her collection—Bethany carries the Father’s heart for the fatherless, and she daily steps into the lives of adoptive families and of foster children, reaching to be a witness of God’s pursing love... *and then*, as she goes into the place of prayer for these children, she often paints them! Stunning! (One more thing that’s important to note—she does commission

work, y'all. Imagine what a gift it would be to have a painting of your young ones hanging in your home...) Jump over here to view some of her work, or to inquire about commissioning her for a personalized painting.



2. Hashtag Wallart. When my dad passed away this summer, two friends of mine (who happen to be sisters) showed up at my front door with the piece of art pictured here, scribing the words to the beautiful old hymn. And needless to say, their gift reached my heart. These two sisters handpaint each of their creations using repurposed wood as their canvas. I want just about everything they make—it's all beautiful! You can view their creative works at their etsy store.



3. Cassandra Erin Jewelry. A gift from Cassandra Erin jewelry is very precious. Cassandra is a metalsmith who can take some of your most prized memories (handprints, footprints, drawings from you children, handwritten notes from a loved possibilities are almost endless) shrink them down in size, and put them right onto a piece of jewelry.



4. Created Art Studio. If you live in the San Antonio area, count yourself blessed right now. This red-head (who is a sweet friend of mine, and an amazing artist) hosts creative sessions in her studio where followers-of-Jesus of all ages can come and *create*. All who walk through the door are given a blank canvas and invited to create from the place of intimacy with their Creator. I'm already brainstorming how I can get down to San Antonio with some of my friends so that we can

create together.



5. Hiding in the Light. This is one of the most gripping stories I have ever read. It's a book that you truly cannot put down. This true story of stunning courage and God's redemptive power is a must, must, must read (in my opinion).



6. Every Bitter Thing is Sweet. This book is a beautiful gift to the body of Christ. Sara Hagerty unfolds her story of finding God in her pain, brings us right in, and provokes us to a deeper place of communion and intimacy with our Lord. I've truly lost count of how many of these books I've gifted to others, and the number is still climbing.



7. Deep Unto Deep. I once heard a friend of mine describe this as the most impacting book she'd ever read. Dana Candler writes from a rich history of seeking after the depths of God's heart, and she urges us to dive down far beneath the surface of our God and to discover the treasure that is found in His holy heart as we seek Him earnestly.



8. Laura Hackett Park's Music. Some of our most favorite songs to sing are "Laura songs." Actually, Jon sings her songs quite often when he leads worship. Her most recent album, *Love Will Have Its Day*, has sounded many a day in our house.



9. Jon Thurlow's Music. I know—it might not be exactly fair for me to put him on the list. But I truly love his music. I

get to see the behind-the-scenes Jon, and I can say with sincerity that he's even more golden in the secret than he is on the stage. *Walking Through the Night* is perhaps my favorite among his albums, though of course, I love them all. Right now, his latest single, *Not Alone*, is free to blog subscribers—so sign up to get this one delivered to your inbox.



10. Anna Blanc's Music. If Jon Thurlow is my favorite, Anna Blanc is definitely in the running for second place. Her heart, her voice, her message is *gold*—and it all comes out in her music. You can visit her website to find her music and her book, *and* she is giving away her newest single, **Weak and Broken Vows** (one of Jon and my favorites), for free.



Much joy to you in your giving this season, friends!

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