

Why You May Want to Give Jesus Your Worst Gift

When life seems overwhelming and thoughts fight to dominate, it can be difficult to enter into deep worship. We may sense God's presence, but sadness, frustration or whatever else we're experiencing sometimes get stuck in the forefront of our minds.

Recently, a conversation left me hurt and angry. I'm usually good about processing pain and negative emotions with the Lord, but I couldn't shake it. The next morning in prayer, I forgave the offending person and tried to engage my heart, but I couldn't get my swirling thoughts to cease.

Finally, I realized that I was presenting *myself* to the Lord with the pain tucked away inside, hoping it would disintegrate in His presence. But it didn't. I tried to imagine myself scooping out the emotional crud and laying it before Him on the altar. It was *my* mess. *My* ugly crud and I despised the way it made me feel.

"Lord, burn it away!" I cried. "I don't want to feel this way. I don't want anything to distract me from the sweetness of your presence."

His response shocked me. "Give me the anger, hurt and confusion as a gift."

I thought about how I had laid it upon the altar. "I did, Lord."

His only reply, "Give it to me as a *gift*."

I couldn't wrap my mind around this. No way was I going to dishonor the Lord by giving Him this nasty mess as a gift! I could only give it to Him as something unrighteous and

disgusting that He could consume and cleanse.

Finally, I laid it on the altar again and sang as loud as I could. I was determined to tap into His heart.

Unexpectedly, I saw Jesus standing in a filthy alley, dressed in white and wearing a crown. He was surrounded with bags of putrid garbage, as if people had piled them around Him on purpose.

When I looked closer, I saw nasty mounds of slimy muck. Even blackened, mutilated hearts. I was appalled. Felt sick. The King of kings deserved better gifts than this.

I lifted my eyes to look at Him. Tears soaked His cheeks. He stared at the mess, smiling as if it blessed Him. As if it was the most beautiful gift He'd ever seen.

When I saw how it touched Him, I felt the grace to present Him with my garbage. Still believing it was nothing more than crud. I pulled out the hurt, anger and confusion and kneeled before Him. I've never felt more humility in my life, as I took this smelly pile of dung and acted as though I were giving my Savior and my King a present. It wasn't concealed in glittery packaging or topped with a deceptive bow.

It was ugly. But it was my gift.

He deserves better, I thought. I know He wants all of me, but to act like it's a beautifully wrapped gift of heartfelt surrender and devotion feels deceptive!

The moment my hands, overflowing with their mucousy mess, touched the ground, I was instantly aware of His attention. Everything inside me broke. I wept deeply. With each guttural cry, He was transforming me, flowing into wounds that needed His glory.

My forehead touched the wet ground in front of Jesus' feet, and I knew it was wet with the tears of those who had brought

their gifts before me. These were gifts that declared He is worth every ounce of our total surrender.

When we bless Him, not with the best versions of ourselves, but our worst, we are open and vulnerable in a way we may never have experienced before. We're trusting Him to love *every single part of us*. Even the places that feel unlovable. We're declaring that His radiance is what makes us truly beautiful.

Jesus is moved by what we may think are our worst gifts. In return, we discover love and acceptance in the deepest possible way.

Jesus deserves a depth of surrender I thought I understood. But from now on, I won't hesitate to humbly lift my mess to Him as a gift, and I hope you won't either.

"Beloved friends, what should be our proper response to God's marvelous mercies? I encourage you to surrender yourselves to God to be his sacred, living sacrifices. And live in holiness, experiencing all that delights his heart. For this becomes your genuine expression of worship" (Rom. 12:1, TPT). {eoa}

Gretchen Rodriguez *has co-authored several devotionals with Brian Simmons for The Passion Translation, including Prayers on Fire and The Divine Romance She is a writer, dancer and ballet teacher. Her heart burns with one main message: intimacy with Jesus and discovering the reality of His presence. She and her husband invested nine years as missionaries in Puerto Rico, along with their three daughters, and now make Redding, California, their home. You can find Gretchen here:*