

But by and through grace, and because of God's love, expressed in Jesus, the gospel proclaims that we do *not* get what we deserve, but instead, by God's grace, he showers us with his goodness and his love.

The gospel says that God will always forgive us, no matter how many times we ask him for his forgiveness. This is why, on the Cross, when Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them..." we hear the answer,

"It is accomplished!" (John 19:30). The gospel says that God's love never ends—the gospel says that the bank of heaven overflows with grace—there is no end of God's favor for you and for me. Let our focus be on the Cross of Christ, and as we look on Jesus the gospel tells us, "*This is God and God is like this.*" □

Greg Albrecht serves as president and pastor of Plain Truth Ministries.

## A Father's Gift

by Ed Dunn

I first remember seeing it when I was a small boy. My father kept it on the top left side of his dresser in his and mom's bedroom. At the time, I was all of seven years old. I loved to wear it around the house, as often as my father would let me. I can still remember how my wrist was so small that it barely stayed clasped and in place above my hand.

The item from my father's dresser was a bright and shiny silver tennis bracelet. Dad's tennis bracelet had a small silver plate in the middle of the chain that wrapped around his wrist. On the top-side of that plate, Dad's name had been engraved in tiny cursive letters on its face. On the underside of the plate, the engraving displayed the day and month of his birth, followed by a year. The bright and shiny silver tennis bracelet had been given to my father on the day of his seventeenth birthday.

As a child, I loved my father's tennis bracelet for many reasons:

first and foremost, I share my father's name, as I'm a "Junior" to his "Senior."

I loved how bright and shiny it looked on my undersized wrist, and that he'd received the bracelet as a birthday gift so many years before. Lastly, the tennis bracelet just looked cool to me. I loved wearing such an "adult" piece of finery wherever and whenever I could.

Not long ago, I had the opportunity to visit my parents after a long time apart due to the recent pandemic. It was during this visit that my mother presented me with my great-grandmother Grace's engagement ring. That generous event on the part of my mother, and her continued desire to give things away, got us talking about family heirlooms again one morning after breakfast. Given the context of the conversation, I asked a



question of my father, somewhat sheepishly, that went something like this:

*"So... Dad, do you happen to remember that old tennis bracelet you used to keep on top of your bedroom dresser all those years ago... you know, the one with your name engraved on it?"*

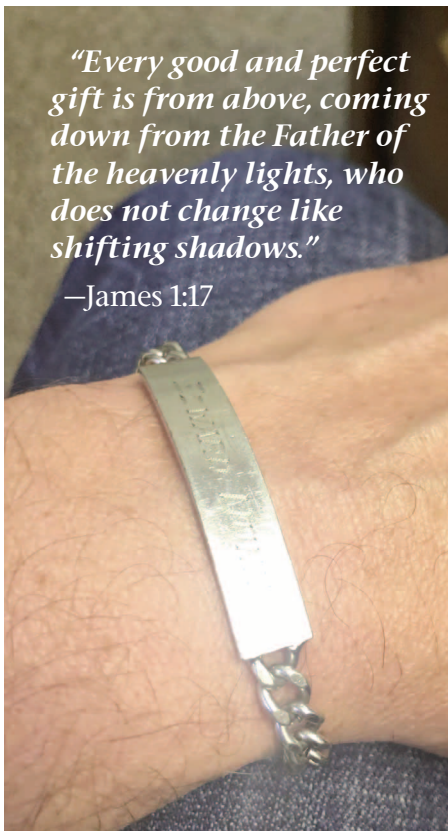
My father thought for a moment. *"Yes, I do. I haven't looked at that for years,"* he replied.

*"Well... given the topic Mom has just initiated, if there's ever a time... down the road... when you might like to give that bracelet away, I'd be more than honored to wear it. The bracelet kinda has my name on it already, and I'd wear it with pride."*

As I finished my question, Dad stood up and disappeared into the

*“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”*

—James 1:17



bedroom. I sat there a little awkwardly waiting to see what would happen next.

Moments later, my father emerged from the bedroom and walked around the living room and into the kitchen. A few more moments after that, Dad walked back into the living room and handed the tennis bracelet to me. “Here, it’s yours,” he said simply with a smile. Dad had taken a few moments in the kitchen to polish the tennis bracelet before handing it to me.

## **EVERY GOOD & PERFECT GIFT**

I love the imagery in the book of James:

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

As a gift, my father’s tennis bracelet is one of my most

cherished possessions. I wear it with pride every day. To receive such a gift right then and there was a complete surprise. I’ll never forget that Dad took the time to polish it before he gave it to me.

Our heavenly Father has given us so many good and perfect gifts—gifts that truly take our breath away and touch us deeply. Our heavenly Father has given us the gift of Christ in us; the gift of his indwelling and transforming power in our lives. Our heavenly Father has given us the gift of community, and communion with him, that we share as Christ-followers with each other and with the world around us. These gifts are gifts that we could never earn. By his grace, our heavenly Father has given these gifts to us freely.

The clarity of the engraving on Dad’s gift has faded ever-so-slightly over the years. The cursive letters and numbers are not quite as bright as they were when I was seven years old. That said, I can still make out his name on the top plate and the date of his seventeenth birthday on the underside. By contrast, our Father’s gifts—all spiritual, eternal and cherished—never fade. Our Father’s gifts are of incalculable value and continue on with us forever. Thanks to our Father, we have a new life—life in Christ Jesus and his life in us. □

*Ed Dunn is associate editor of CWRm and Plain Truth magazine.*

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