



The Gift

Bryan M. Litfin

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Book two in the Chiveis Trilogy

Hundreds of years in the future, war and disease have destroyed civilization as we know it. Modern technology has vanished and history is largely forgotten. A struggling society of survivors has just begun to rebuild, creating kingdoms of a feudal order.

Exiled from their beloved home of Chiveis, Teo and Ana journey into foreign lands in search of the second half of Deu's sacred writings. But finding an ancient manuscript is far from easy, especially when the pair is tempted, tried, and separated along the way.

On a quest fraught with unforeseen perils, murderous villains, and the prejudices of elite societies, the bond between Teo and Ana is put to the ultimate test. Though the New Testament might be found in distant Roma, will the price of its discovery be too high to pay?

The Gift Details

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From Reader Review The Gift for online ebook

NinaB says

I was debating whether to give this 1 or 2 stars. I really liked The Sword, so was very disappointed with The Gift.

First the pros: the plot is as good as the first in the Chiveis Trilogy with ample actions and unexpected twists that kept my interest going. There were a lot of amusing new characters and the author developed them well. The author makes you really hate the villains and really love the good guys (except for one, see below). I love how good wins in unexpected ways! Unfortunately, these pros were not big enough to overcome the cons mentioned below.

Now the cons: the most glaring negative aspect of the book is its roman Catholic references throughout. One example is the character of Papa(view spoiler) Papa's character is even unnecessary as the Overseer seems like a good spiritual leader already with great leader qualities. (view spoiler) The author could've introduced this part of the story by way of a manuscript or book.

Another con is the ongoing sexual tension between Ana and Teo. Enough already! This was frustrating in the first book and I got even more tired of it here. It was too distracting in the flow of the story.

I also want to note that there were instances when it would have served Ana and Teo better if they had spoken in their native Chiveisan tongue to communicate so they wouldn't be understood by others. (view spoiler)Of course, it all worked out in the end, but still it didn't seem believable for Ana and Teo to communicate in a foreign tongue when talking with each other.

In light of my disappointment with The Gift, I am ambivalent about reading the third in the Chivesian trilogy. I was really hoping these books would turn out great and undoubtedly represent the Christian worldview in current publications. But they don't. At least, The Gift cannot with its elevation of the Pope and the false religion he represents. I think the plot was ok, but with the Roman Catholic distraction, I cannot recommend this book.

Jason McFadden says

If you like action, adventure, fantasy, chivalry, piracy, betrayal, romance, love, peril, or plot twists, then you will like The Gift, book two in the Chiveis Trilogy, by Bryan M. Litfin.

The author wields pleasant vocabulary usage, wrests a solid plot pace, waves a nice story arc, waxes plentiful descriptions without leaving you feeling ransacked with too many details, and writes winsome plus wicked characters.

I typically enjoy action and adventure. And The Gift's metal clanging sword fights and fiery explosions do not disappoint. But to my surprise and delight, just as in this trilogy's first book, I found myself more drawn to the relationship of the two primary protagonists!

Watching their relationship develop was satisfying. But you also see their unfolding love for someone

greater than themselves, creating a dynamic atmosphere.

In comparison, *The Gift*, the second book in the Chiveis trilogy, is an improvement upon the first book (*The Sword*). The story was less linear, having more forks in the road and also a greater cast of characters. The writing itself also seemed improved with practice.

The Gift has a strong Christian foundation and message, yet the story would not be rated 'G'. It is realistic in its depictions of violence and immodesty at points, but it is done so in a delicately balanced way; honestly and discreetly.

The icing on the cake actually arrives after the final showdown in the epilogue, but it's only icing if you have first read *The Sword*. Considerately trying to avoid spoilers, let me say it like this: Take the greatest antagonist from a story you have read, a villain so vile and despised that you eagerly anticipate justice to win, then double that, add more anticipation...then enjoy eating the icing on the cake!

What are you waiting for? Do yourself a favor and start reading this trilogy! It is possible to read *The Gift* on its own, but it is enriched by the backstory laid out in the first book, *The Sword*. Don't pass it up.

I look forward to reading the third segment of the Chiveis Trilogy, *The Kingdom*. There are still questions to be answered and adventures to be had!

Dave Jones says

Book 2 of Chiveis trilogy. Another exciting read. The lead female protagonist (Ana) has survived much adversity but, in prosperity, has slowly compromised her faith.

The quest for the missing New Testament continues. It leads us to some surprising places. The story makes me appreciate the ready availability of our Bible.

Great book with lots of adversity and narrow escapes. I'm really enjoying this series.

Heidi Middlebrough says

I listened to the audiobook read by Ray Porter. Wow. He is an amaaaaazing narrator. The amount of different voices he came up with for every character (big and small. And there are A LOT) is astounding.

Bob Hayton says

Step forward several hundred years into a post-nuclear apocalypse future. Earth has lost most of her technology and a new feudal age is in full swing. In this world, the Christians are hunted down and nearly exterminated, and even the very message of the New Testament has been lost and nearly forgotten.

This is the story that Bryan M. Litfin crafts for us in his Chiveis Trilogy. "*The Gift: A Novel*", the second

book in the series, follows Captain Teofil and Anastasia as they journey through new lands in search of the lost New Testament. Along the way, their adventures are many as they narrowly escape imprisonment, torture and death at every turn. The physical dangers aren't the only obstacles in their quest, they battle temptation to fit in to the spirit of the world they inhabit, too.

The book comes off feeling a bit like a fantasy work, yet there are no fantastic characters. It's actually more similar to a tale from a long lost medieval age, with the twist of people trying to search out the true meaning of Christianity. The character development is excellent even if the plot at times seems too good to be true. The quest to find the true nature of Christianity and to uncover the lost New Testament makes for a great story line, however. And the book moves along at a quick pace.

Without having read the first book, I was still able to enter the story easily: enough of the backstory was retold that I didn't feel lost. This book also comes with 15 study questions in the back which would allow it to serve as a class assignment for a study of literature, or equally well as a discussion guide for talking over the story and the moral dilemmas which faced its characters with your teen-age children.

This story was both unique and well-written. And what is vital for a fictional tale, it was ultimately satisfying. Yet the book offered even more, it was a work about our Christian faith and the struggle to live it out faithfully in whatever age we find ourselves in. I recommend the book highly. It would make for great summer reading. I'll be keeping my eye out for the conclusion of Litfin's Chiveis Trilogy, too.

Disclaimer: This book was provided by Crossway Books for review. I was under no obligation to offer a favorable review.

Justine says

a wonderful Fantasy adventure that takes place in the distant post-apocalyptic future, when Christianity is but a dim memory and humanity is struggling to rebuild itself and rediscover its roots. I didn't read the first book but didn't need to; I caught up nicely.

Michelle says

The Gift is a powerfully written story about forgiveness and a desire to know the truth, no matter the cost. The author has a gift for making situations impossible and seemingly hopeless, then finding hope in every situation. I lost track of the number of times I held my breath expecting the worst, which often happened. As the story progressed I saw how even the worst circumstances were used by God for a greater purpose. There were so many spiritual truths and lessons in this novel. I couldn't imagine living in a world knowing most of the truth, but then missing the greatest portion of that truth, the person of Jesus Christ, who ties the Old Testament to the New. This story moved me to tears on numerous occasions and gave me an even greater appreciation for the scriptures. It also contained a powerful romance that was compelling because it showed the power of true love and the beauty of committing to loving one person for life, the person God intended for you. Teo and Ana exemplified sacrificial love, which always draws the unsaved to faith in Jesus Christ, Who is the model for us all. It's impossible to read The Gift and not be moved in some way. I cannot wait to read the next book in this incredible series.

Reanne says

Some spoilers below.

On the whole, Ray Porter's narration is very good, but he reads the woman Vanita as if she's a gay snake.

I wish the villains weren't so cartoonishly evil. At one point, the bad guys are plotting, and when they're done they basically go, "Now, let's do something evil," and strangle a bunny. Literally.

Some people complain about the romantic aspect, but I actually wish there was more of it. At one point, Ana is sunbathing topless with a bunch of people. This is incredibly out of character for her, I suppose showing how much she's allowing this foreign culture to change who she is. Teo is in the vicinity, but he never actually sees them on the beach. I really wanted him to run into her in that moment, because reactions like that are priceless. I'd expect a combination of turned on + disappointed, and then maybe anger and hurt. And then her reaction to him seeing her would also have been great. But it doesn't happen, so the opportunity is totally wasted. In my opinion, that was a potentially for a really interesting character interaction just wasted.

Ana has one or two real TSTL moments. Teo comes to save her, but she ruins his attempt by demanding to be killed by the bad guys anyway, without even realizing that maybe he had a plan, despite the fact that he's had plans to get them both out of certain death situations before. It's at this point that I think the willingness to sacrifice herself becomes stupid. Because it's not a necessary sacrifice and she's doing it out of a lack of faith (in Teo and in God), and she doesn't think it through rationally. It's a decision based on emotion. She wants so badly to die for Teo that she doesn't even consider that he might have a plan to get them both out. Of course, Teo doesn't say much to hint to her that it'll be okay, so that was stupid as well. Characters being willing to die for each other is great, but when they insist on it in lieu of displaying any reason, thought, or faith, it's just irritating and seems like the plot is being forced in a certain way.

Okay, but overall, I did quite enjoy this book, and it didn't have a rough patch for me like the first book did.

Matthew says

Last year, Crossway released Bryan Litfin's first novel in the Chiveis Trilogy, *The Sword*. That book introduced readers to Teofil, a noble army guardsman, and Anastasia, a beautiful peasant woman 400 years into our future. Civilization was destroyed by a nuclear holocaust, and many things from our culture were lost, including the Bible and Christianity, for the most part. In *The Sword*, though, Teo and Ana find an ancient copy of the Old Testament and come to believe in the Creator God described in its pages, a God known to them as Deu. *The Sword* ended with the main characters forced from their homeland and into exile because of their faith.

In the second installment, *The Gift*, Litfin picks the story up right where he left off, and we join Teo and Ana on their search for the missing New Testament, which they know will fill in many of the gaps they see in the Old Testament. Of course, there are powers at work that will do anything to keep this from happening, including the Exterminati (I know, subtle), an organization of shamans who oppose the Christiani and who rid the "civilized" world of "defectives," those who they deem less than perfect due to mental or physical

handicap.

(Side note: Litfin clearly wanted to communicate ideas about certain issues within this story, such as the value of all humans, including the disabled. There's also a subtle discussion of homosexuality and how Christians respond to that. Occasionally these things feel forced into the plot and can be pretty abrupt.)

The most fascinating part of this book to me was watching the characters think through what the New Testament might say. With their only knowledge of Deu coming from the Old Testament, their knowledge is incomplete and simply wrong some times. They know that Jesus Christ, the "pierced one" from the cross, was likely the suffering servant talked about in the prophets, but they don't know how his death helped the Promised King. They know much about the character of God and have a sincere and real faith in Him, but they agonize over not knowing the whole story about the King. This drives their search for the New Testament.

This provides a great context to consider what it looked like for people before Christ who were waiting for him, but weren't really sure what they were waiting to see. Many had no idea that the Suffering Servant and the Promised King were one and the same. There are very interesting thoughts to consider at times in *The Gift*.

Despite the interesting premise, as a novel, the book does lack at times. The dialogue feels a little stilted at times, and Litfin clearly wants to communicate a worldview that comes with a vocabulary that feels unnatural in the book's setting. The action sequences are quite good, however, and as with *The Sword*, the attention to the detail of the real-life settings is spectacular. I just couldn't get passed some of the dialogue that jolted me out of the story occasionally.

Overall, though, I would recommend the first two books of this trilogy. Solid Christian fiction that seeks to portray a biblical worldview within fiction is pretty lacking in the marketplace (unless you happen to enjoy stories about the Amish). Although these books suffer from some of the same problems that plague Christian movies (forced plots and dialogue, lack of subtlety and nuance at times), it's still very nice to see talented authors attempting to imbed biblical truths in a fictional story that will draw readers who might not sit down with a systematic theology, but might be positively influenced in their views of God by a solid epic story.

Christy Lockstein says

The Gift by Bryan Litfin is the second book in the Chiveis Trilogy. A dystopian society, hundreds of years in Earth's future after a nuclear war has put the few remaining inhabitants into a pseudo-medieval style of life. Teofil was a professor in Chiveis before discovering an ancient sacred text that introduced him to the god Deu. He and friend Anastasia have fled their homeland where the authorities wanted to put them to death for their faith in the mysterious Creator God. *The Gift* picks up with their exile away from Chiveis where they travel to Umbartia. Ana is quickly embraced into the lavish aristocratic society while Teofil is forced away from her, despite his growing feelings for her. Teofil continues his search for the second half of the Sacred Text, the missing New Testament, while Ana loses herself in a hedonistic society with new friend Vanita who encourages her to forget her home and friends and embrace this new life. Ana and Teo are pulled apart and together again in surprising and tragic ways. I absolutely loved *The Sword*, the first book in this series. I love how Litfin has made the so well-known Bible by allowing readers to see it through the eyes of people who have no idea what Christianity means or its relevance in the world. Teo and Ana run into images of a man crucified on a cross and try to make sense of Jesus Christ without the New Testament. That is still a

fascinating part of the book, as well as learning how the faith has survived in this new, dark world. Litfin finally gives readers a few clues as to where the books are taking place, and some famous names from history make a surprising appearance here. For me, this didn't quite live up to *The Sword*, although it's still a terrific novel. I was disappointed in Ana's defection, and Litfin manipulates the reader deceptively a couple of times. *The Gift* still offers a fascinating story with lots of action, suspense, faith, and a bit of romance. I can't wait to read the last book in this trilogy and see how Litfin brings this huge story to an end (and part of me hopes he'll keep it going for more than just one more book yet!).

Megan Lewis says

The storyline and premise are interesting and intriguing. I found character development was pretty good and the overall message of the book was decent.

I would not recommend this book for younger readers because there is a substantial amount of adult content. There were a few lewd comments (which, to be fair, were never portrayed in a glorifying manner but as a part of evil actions. Even so, the creepy necrophile was not terribly welcome, in my opinion).

Overall a pretty good read.

Becky says

It had been over a year since I read, *The Sword*, the first book in the Chiveis Trilogy. So there is a chance that had a little something to do with how disconnected I was at the start of this one, but, I still think the first half of this novel has some issues.

What did I struggle with in this second book? I'm not sure if I struggled more with the plot or with the characters. Teo and Ana are exiled from their country, but, are soon welcomed into a new country. Ana is accepted into the social elite (I'm not sure if this was just because she was so beautiful, or, if they assumed she was a fine lady in the other country and deserved the same special treatment there), but, Teo is not. He manages to stay very, very, very loosely connected with Ana by claiming the role of her tutor. But almost everyone assumes that he's merely her love slave. Ana glories in her new lifestyle, she loves her new rich friends, loves all the parties, loves the clothes, loves the attention and flattery. The more materialistic Ana becomes, the less prone she is to listen to Teo who warns her not to forget the most important thing. But does Ana listen? Oh, no, she does not. Does she drink? Does she party? Does she start sunbathing in the nude in public? Yes, yes, yes. She stops listening to Teo, stops listening to God, and then starts questioning and doubting things she knows to be true. Teo is a man who is torn in his duties. On the one hand, he knows that finding the New Testament is the MOST important, most essential thing he could do. He knows that finding the New Testament, translating it into a language that can be understood, getting the full truth of God's message to men is the MOST IMPORTANT thing he could do. It's worth living and dying for. He knows he must attempt it no matter the risk. But, at the same time, he's torn because he wants to save Ana from herself, and from outside dangers as well. He knows that she's not safe, he knows she's being really stupid, he knows that her faith is endangering her life, he knows that she has enemies--as he knows that he has enemies. So part of him wants to stay in the background just watching and waiting and watching and waiting and watching and waiting...to see what happens next in Ana's life. Does Ana even know that Teo is around? No, not really. She assumes that he's moved on, moved away, accepted their new places in society. Because she

has pushed him out of her thoughts--essentially--she doesn't really appreciate the sacrifices he's making for her. So essentially, the first half of the novel could be summed up as: watch Ana be stupid. The second half of the novel is different, however, for Ana realizes that she's walked away from God, and she's made some big mistakes. She turns towards God, finds forgiveness, becomes selfless, humbles herself, etc. Teo does not change in the second half, he remains the hero he's been since page one, book one.

The plot. What can I say? There's a dark side to these books, a dark side that delights in torture, torture, and more torture. Readers are forced to "overhear" evil, evil plots that endanger the characters we care about, or are supposed to care about. In a way, I suppose, the dark side adds tension, contrast, suspense to the novel. But there's only so much torture a person can take without becoming sick of it.

The second half of the novel does become intense, but I'm not sure it's a good enough intense. Part of me got frustrated even with the second half of this one because it was Teo's turn to be stupid, I suppose. In a couple of crucial moments, moments where he had to choose between his mission to serve God, to find the New Testament, to find out the truth, the whole truth of God's message, to restore Christianity, he chose saving the girl.

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So in this one scene, the scene when they discover the last remaining copy of the New Testament, the only copy supposedly still in existence on the whole planet, and the bad guys show up and he has to choose between saving the girl's life (supposedly, they have her in their grasp) and handing the copy over knowing that it's just a matter of time--perhaps minutes, perhaps hours, perhaps days--before it is destroyed....and he chooses the girl. Never mind that a whole secret community is counting on him, never mind that there is no one left on the planet who knows who Jesus Christ is, why he came to Earth, why he died, the fact that he rose again, the fact that he saves us from our sins, delivers us from our sins, restores and redeems us, adopts us. Etc. This body of believers--men, women who believe in the one true Creator God--who knows nothing at all about the New Testament, any event, any promise, any doctrine, etc. And he chooses the girl. And the New Testament is burned. Part of me was like, how is saving Ana going to bring salvation to the world? Do you even realize what you just threw away? I mean, sure, this proves that he *loves* her in that way, something she was in doubt about for the first half of the novel because he hadn't spent every moment of every hour of every day flattering her, complimenting her, and trying to kiss her, etc. But I was a little frustrated with Teo here.

Chris says

I read this a of couple years ago, but not all the way through, so I forgot most of it.

First, how I felt: There were times when I couldn't put the book down, and others where it was a burden to

read. Also, the romance between Teo and Ana was annoying. Not that I didn't like the idea, but it could have been done better. Also, some of the descriptions of death in the book provided gave too much information, making it a little strange. Finally, the plot. Without giving anything away, some of the things that happened, I felt, were a little unrealistic and too good to be true. It's okay for bad things to happen!

The message is powerful and amazing if you take the time to think about it. The book focuses on Christ and has a lot of parallels in the plot, and some of the unrealistic elements do add to the parallels. I'd recommend you watch some of the videos on the author's website before reading it, so you can catch them all. If nothing else, Bryan Litfin does this extremely well. Just for that I'd recommend reading it.

Last, I just want to mention some of the theological implications. For a Christian book, at times it seemed like the characters acted and talked like the false gods were real and had some power, even though at other times they talked about "Deu" being the one, true God. It probably wasn't intentional. Also, some other reviewers mentioned, this but the Universal Communion seemed a lot like the Catholic church. Catholic actually means all-encompassing/universal. The characters also referred to the "Papa" as "Holy Father." (view spoiler)

That said, the writing itself could have been better, but the storyline and message is great and makes for a amazing story. Even if you're not a Christian, you might like it too. I'd recommend it to anyone who likes speculative fiction and possibly just Christian fiction. Give it a try!

Lori says

Loved it!!

Tim says

The Gift is the second book in Chiveis Trilogy. Crossway sent me a prepublication copy to review. It may be helpful to take a look at my review of The Sword, the first book in the trilogy. In this review, I'll try to avoid any spoilers.

By way of introduction, Bryan Litfin teaches theology at Moody Bible Institute. This trilogy is his first foray into writing fiction. This trilogy has romance, action and Christian theology nicely put together in the story.

In The Gift I found that Litfin has gotten better at this type of writing. There were a few places in The Sword where I cringed a bit. There was none of that in The Gift. What I hope he grows in in the third installment is in character construction. Though Ana and Teo are no longer in their home kingdom, some of the characters were familiar. Teo's mentor in The Gift felt very much like his mentor in The Sword. Ana's flighty girlfriend is very like her flighty girlfriend in the first installment. Their malevolent foe in Ulmbartia seems a lot like the one they left behind in Chiveis. This didn't ruin the story but it did give it a somewhat familiar feel. Also, as happened in The Sword, strangers trust our hero and heroine too quickly and easily.

None of this is to say that the story was a repeat. It certainly wasn't. Often the second book in a trilogy can be a bit flat as it is bridging the beginning of the story with its resolution. Litfin never let The Gift fall into that trap. The story moves along briskly and always had me wanting to find out what happens next. Pacing

has proven to be something Litfin understands. Just when I was beginning to getting tired of the right person showing up just in the nick of time, Litfin changed it up. He fought against making *The Gift* predictable and mostly succeeded. He also showed finesse in the way he rehashed the first book for those who didn't read it. He carefully retold the story in a manner that felt like it belonged. I don't think anyone would be lost reading *The Gift* if they didn't read *The Sword*.

What I found somewhat brave about *The Gift* was how Litfin introduced evangelical hot button issues: sex, homosexuality, alcohol, nudity. Litfin didn't omit the ugly side of a kingdom that has forgotten Christianity. Had he chosen to make the Ulbartian culture "acceptably depraved" by avoiding those issues, it could have made the story "safe for the whole family" and at the same time made it lifeless and boring. Litfin includes these things and he doesn't do it in a tawdry or approving fashion. He simply presents them as what they are. Wisely, he leaves us to recognize them as wrong. We don't have a character acting as Litfin's moral mouthpiece. To my mind, that's good writing; it invites us into the story not to passively consume but to feel and react.

In the end, I found *The Gift* an improvement on *The Sword* in most respects. It will prove to be fun summer reading and could provide some interesting points of discussion on how the world would look after a plague and small scale nuclear war but also on engaging theological questions as well. Crossway even included study questions at the end to facilitate it.
