

# A Church Alive: The Heart of a Giver

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*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? – Luke 11:13*

## Background

Jesus was in a place communing with the Father. Around him were the disciples, watching him pray and at the end asked him for a technique – a method of prayer, in the same way that John had instructed his disciples. The disciples were looking at the tactical operation of prayer – Jesus was good at it, and they wanted to be good at it as well. Jesus was less concerned with the specific operation – as a matter of fact, the technique he gave was very simple. Jesus was more concerned with connecting the disciples with the heart of God – a heart that loves to give.

## Taking Care of a Friend

*And he said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey and I have nothing to set before him’; and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me. The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give to you.’?” – Luke 11:5-7*

Jesus redirected the disciples to something that they could relate to: an unexpected visitor. It would be one thing for them if they had known their friend was coming. They could have prepared, shopped and had everything that the friend would need, or at least what the friend would expect from them. But when there is an unexpected knock at the door, when there is no opportunity to give “*from my own storehouse*” or to plan for what may be needed, it is completely different. What Jesus shows in this is that while there were two options, only one made sense:

- 1) The friend could have told the traveler, “Sorry, I just cannot accommodate you today. Maybe if you come back tomorrow I can be of assistance
- 2) The friend could have found someone to help – he would not be content until he could have taken care of the need.

In our culture, we have opportunity to put people off regularly... voicemail, answering texts later, etc. As a matter of fact, it would be rude to just “show up” at someone’s house, but in this culture it would be rude to not take care of someone who happens to show up.

*I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him **because he is his friend**, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs – Luke 11:8*

In this scenario, the neighbor helps, not because of friendship, but because of the persistence of the friend: *he was so concerned with providing for the traveler that he would not rest until the need was met.* The heart of the giver, in this case, the friend

was totally focused on the traveler. He wouldn't take no for an answer when it came to being able to provide for his friend. This needs to be our mindset when it comes to the manifestation of the Spirit in the lives of those we encounter: the more we are set on giving what is needed, on not settling for the easy excuse of what we do not have (or settling for what we can find, whether it meets the need or not), the more we will match the heart of the Father, who loves to give.

### What a Giver Gives

*If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you, then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? – Luke 11:11-13*

Jesus appealed to the father heart of the disciples to prove a point about prayer, and about the Father. Remember, this all started because the disciples asked him to teach them to pray. The disciples knew that a father would not meet the need of a son with something that would not satisfy or would harm. The obvious answer to

***For the disciples to understand prayer, they needed to know that the Heavenly Father would not meet them and their requests with that which would not satisfy, nor would he act in a way that was less than an earthly father would. In fact, God would do so much more.***

Jesus' rhetorical question was "no, a father would not do that. Of course a father would do right by his son". The father would give out of his heart to satisfy his son. For the disciples to understand prayer, they needed to know that the Heavenly Father would not meet them and their requests with that which would not satisfy, nor would he act in a way that was less than an

earthly father would. In fact, God would do so much more. *If you, then being evil... how much more...* For those who would look for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their lives, how much more would God grant that request! This was the reason Jesus was so powerful in his prayer time, not just because he knew that he was heard. He also knew that as he prayed for the Holy Spirit to be manifest to him and to those around him, that God, because of his heart to give, would do just that.

### Matching the Father's Heart – Being a Giver

*If you, then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? **Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.** – Matthew 7:11-12*

Jesus taught the same lesson to a larger group in the Sermon on the Mount. As he spoke about the kingdom and the life that they should expect, he wasn't going to simply leave them in a state of expectation. They needed to begin to live the life they expected to receive. This was also a lesson in prayer, that it was to be tied to the desires of the heart. *Our prayers and expectations for others are not to be rote and*

*liturgical, but real... the same things that we would expect to happen for us are what we should want for others, and not only should we want them, but we should take steps to fulfill them.* Do we desire wisdom for our lives and situations? *Are we willing to give wisdom to others, to ask for wisdom for them?* Do we need healing in some area? *Are we willing to put ourselves out there for those who need healing?* Are we bombarding heaven because we need a miracle in our lives? *Are we seeking the same for those in our circle?* When we think of the manifestation of the Spirit, it is not to be because of anything other than our heart pouring out for those we encounter. We should have a heart of a giver, just like the Father's heart. Just as we know how to give good things to our children (or to those we love), we should have not only the confidence that God will move in our lives, but in the lives of those around us as well.

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### Seeing the Gifts; Seeing the Giver

*But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one **for the profit of all**: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. – I Corinthians 12:7-11*

As we focus on the gifts themselves, we run the danger of approaching them the same way the disciples approached Jesus: *teach us **how** to use these.* Yet, Jesus gives us a deeper revelation: In the same way the Father's heart is to give the Holy Spirit and good things to those who ask, the Holy Spirit's heart is to give the manifestation of the Spirit to each person so all can benefit. Our heart therefore should be so focused on others, on their need or on what will be appropriate for them that we are constantly asking the Father to meet their need. Our expectation should be that God would do just that, and pour out His Spirit in the form of the gifts of the Spirit