

Spirit Driven

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7

Power to give

He was excited to share the news – he was chosen to represent his high school and his state at the young leaders' conference in Washington D.C. It was a high honor, but it came with a price, he would be responsible for paying his own travel expenses. Being the child of two Lutheran school teachers, any expense would be too much, let alone the estimated cost for a week in Washington D.C.

He tried to hide his disappointment when his parents shared the concern about cost. Grandpa was consulted. Grandpa was excited for his grandson – but couldn't give the entire cost. But Grandpa offered to send him a gold coin – something Grandpa had to help him in his retirement. The coin could be sold for over half of the estimated cost. Grandpa sent the coin.

Mom and Dad huddled and started figuring. Mom emptied her "rainy day emergency" fund and Dad cashed in all of his coins. With some creative financing and some imaginative meal planning – the news was shared – you can go to Washington D.C. Smiles, shouts of joy and good feelings gave way to some moments of doubt as the letter arrived with the dress code requirements – ties and jackets must be worn at all times. He was like most high school boys of the day – fancy dress meant a collared T-shirt. The other Grandpa found out about the predicament – soon a package arrived with three of his old suits with matching shirts and ties. Grandma was able to tailor the suits to fit and reflect the latest style.

He smiled, Mom and Dad held back the tears as he boarded the bus for Washington D.C.

That was giving.

•"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. •For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

•"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? •Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? •If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! •So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. – Matthew 7:7-12

It starts the day they are born – when parents hear that first cry from their child, they drop everything in order to provide that which the child needs – food, comfort, dry diaper, burp or just company. From that first cry forward, parents bend over backwards to give to their child. We will sacrifice, save, and do most everything in our power to meet not only their needs, but most of their wants. Christ commends parents for giving good gifts to children.

Can you remember a time when you really wanted something and your parents had to sacrifice to provide it?

Can you remember a time when you really wanted something and your parents were not able to provide it or refused?

As you look back, what had the most affect on your life – that which was wanted and provided, or that which was not provided?

Is there a time when the best gift to give your child is not to give them what they ask for?

What are the gifts Your heavenly Father gives to you?

How does His gift of eternal life help us as we give away that which is entrusted to us?

¹And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. – 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

The gift of giving allows an individual or an organization the ability to give, even when it appears as if there is nothing to give.

Can you think of a person who continues to give, even as it appears there is nothing more to give?

Are there times in your life when you were able to give, even if it appeared as if there was nothing to give?

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' – Matthew 25:34-40

This parable speaks to the gifts we give – not always money, but food, drink, welcome, clothes, visitation, acceptance, and the like.

Is it easier to give gifts to friends, family, church or strangers?

Sometimes we give things but withhold our heart. Is it important that the gift is 'from the heart'?

God gives to us – daily. God gives us all that we need for life – and more. God gives to us the best gift – eternal life.

Can we ever out-give God? Even when it appears that God has taken away all that which we need, does He still give us gifts?

Is it possible that we can be the ones that God uses to provide for others?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,
You open Your hands and give to us all we need for this life – Thank You. You also give to us food, clothing, home, friends, family, and uncounted gifts of things, giving to us not only what we need for life, but most of what we want – Thank You. Through the gift of Christ You have given to us that which gives eternal life, not by our works, but by His – Thank You.

Father, Thank You for allowing us to be stewards of Your gifts. Help us always to see how we can best use them for You – help us to discern when the best use of Your gift is to give it away.

In Your name we pray – Amen.