

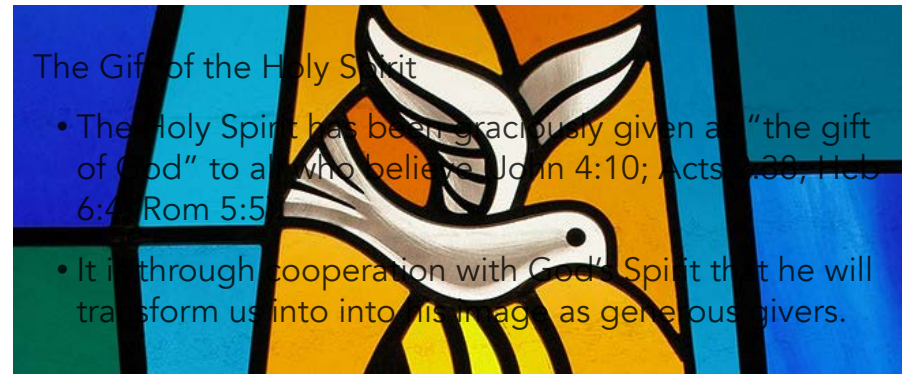
Our God is a generous gift-giving God
who wants to shape us into his image
to be a gift-giving people
who are generous with our time, talents,
and treasures.



Our Generous Gift-Giving God

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit has been graciously given as "the gift of God" to all who believe (John 4:10; Acts 2:38; Heb 6:4; Rom 5:5)
- It is through cooperation with God's Spirit that he will transform us into his image as generous givers.



Our Generous Gift-Giving God

“God’s Spirit fills his people with compassion and concern for those in greatest need; he grows different kinds of fruit in us, all expressed in love toward the other; and he provides amazing gifts to equip us to pursue the common good. God’s Spirit draws us into the life of God and allows us to extend that life and love to others. That is true life, that is freedom, that is a great gift” (Kelly Kopic, *God So Loved, He Gave*, 117).

Our Appropriate Response

Faith & Gratitude are our appropriate response to the fact that God is a generous giver.

Availability & Participation are our appropriate responses based on the purpose of God’s generous gifts, which aim at making us into generous givers, not just gracious receivers.

Responding with Availability

God’s gifts call on us to make ourselves available to their giver.

The most we can do is make ourselves available to God to be used as his instruments.

“God never works in us without us” (Martin Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will*).

Responding with Availability

“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” ³⁶*For from him and through him and for him are all things.* To him be the glory forever! Amen.

^{12:1}Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies [together] as [one] living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship” (Rom 11:35-12:1).

Responding with Availability

1. "To offer our bodies" – We offer ourselves and make everything available to God.
2. "Living Sacrifices" — God the giver requires a living sacrifice, ready to do God's work in God's world.
3. A Communal Act – We are called to offer our bodies [plural] as one "living sacrifice" to the one true God.

Responding with Participation

"We were created to be and to act like God. And so the flow of God's gifts shouldn't stop as soon as it reaches us. The outbound movement must continue. Indeed, in addition to making us flourish, giving to others is the very purpose for which God gave us the gifts. [We are meant] to pass them on, participating in God's gift giving" (Volf, *Free of Charge*, 49).

Responding with Participation

We respond by participating in God's gift giving.

- God's gifts flow generously out from him... they are outbound and unidirectional.
- We are not the final destinations in the flow of God's gifts. Rather we are midstream!

Responding with Participation

Blessed to be a blessing.

"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:2-3).

Responding with Participation

Participating with God's transforming work.

"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil 2:12-13).

Responding with Participation

Ultimately, Christ is the agent of our giving.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

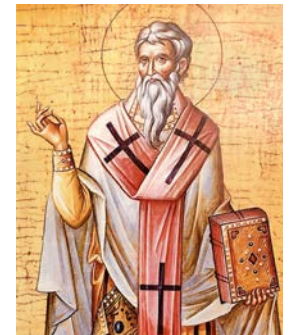
Becoming like Christ



"Christians pursued a lifestyle of pleasing God and becoming Godlike, not for the sake of power or status but to become truly human, made in God's image and remade into the likeness of Christ. That meant imitating Christ's character, his humility, love, righteousness and purity" (Nijay Gupta, *Strange Religion*, 178).

Becoming like Christ

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, out of his boundless love, became what we are that he might make us what he himself is" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5)



Becoming like Christ

God's purpose in transforming us into the image of the Son are to restore his original intentions with creation.

- For us: God's intentions are to make us flourish.
- For the gifts: God's gifts are never intended just for us.
- For our neighbours: God's intentions for our neighbours is that they too flourish through us.

Becoming like Christ

Our giving will be different than God's giving!

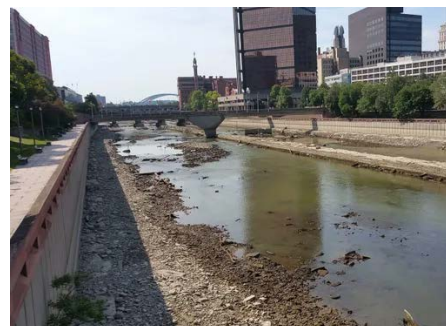
- God is the *first* giver – our gifts are derivative.
- God is an *infinite* giver – our gifts are finite.
- God is a *utterly loving* giver – our gifts will always be tainted with some selfishness.

Conclusion



What happens when the flow of God's generous gifts reach us?

Conclusion



Does the flow stop?
Making us only receivers, not givers.
(If this is the case, we would then be unlike what is most divine in God).

Conclusion



Or does the flow
continue downstream?

Conclusion

“Make me a Channel
of your Peace” – A
Prayer attributed to
Francis of Assisi
(1182 – 1226).

