

Does God really want to give us the good life?

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- [0 : 00] All right. Well, would you pray with me as we look at God's word again? Father, we thank you for this morning, just the beautiful day you've given us.
- It's just glorious. We thank you for the fresh air and just the ocean we can see and smell. And we thank you for the time we can spend with each other and just the time to stop and pause and realize that you're with us and you're for us and you're ready to provide for us and just the time we can spend as brothers and the time we can spend listening to you.
- God, you've given us so much. And now we ask you to give us more. We ask that you'd speak to us. Lord, we all struggle to trust you to give us what we need.
- Lord, we sometimes doubt that you actually want to give us good things. So, God, we need you to speak to us. We need you to show us that you are good because in our natural selves we will keep doubting you.
- Please speak to us. Please show us yourself. And please teach us to pray. And in Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Well, one minute you have a steady income.
- [1 : 19] Two weeks later you're facing unemployment. Unemployment. You pray to God to be delivered from sexual temptation. The next morning you wake up plagued with guilt again.
- You keep serving in that ministry at church and that initial high is all but gone and it's just a burden now. That relationship just keeps repeating that destructive pattern with no relief.
- You don't know how to stop it. You wake up not sure how you're going to get through breakfast, let alone the rest of the day. You arrive at church, you stand up to sing, you sit down and listen.
- You mingle, you chat and you leave feeling like nothing and no one actually touched you, really. You want your character to be more like Christ.
- But if you ask him, you're afraid what God will take away to make you more like Christ. Does God really want to give us life?
- [2 : 34] Is God just not hearing the prayers of the farmers who are in drought? Does he care? Does he care? That farmers are suicidal?
- Does he care? Your child is still struggling at school, in class, socially? Why would God force Glenn and Beth to permanently live away from PNG?
- Why would he do that? Australia as a nation just keeps rushing to become more and more anti-God. You just can't handle the pressure of aging parents as well as every other responsibility you've got.
- We keep putting on evangelistic events as a church and only one or two unbelievers show up. Your son, your sister, your dad, your grandma.
- Why doesn't God help them to have faith in Christ and be saved? Is he not hearing our many prayers? We cry, we pray, and sometimes we get nothing.
- [3 : 52] We have no doubt that God has the power to fix it, do we? We've got no doubt about his power. But does God really want to give us life?

If God doesn't give us the good we want, we begin to wonder, is he actually good? I think this is one of the fundamental barriers to our prayers, isn't it?

It's that niggling doubt. Does God actually want to give us life? This is a big topic.

So I'd like to pray again. So would you pray with me again? Father, we know that you're good.

When we look at your son on the cross, we know it. We know that you've given us eternal life. We know you're good, but we still struggle to see you as good.

[4 : 5 6] We still doubt. Our experiences are painful. We just wonder why you don't give us the good we want.

Please speak to us. We need your spirit to be our teacher today. Please speak to us. Please show us that you're good. Renew our confidence in you again.

Help us to pray. To you as our good father, please help us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, in our last session, we learned that a prayerful man needs to be aware of his need, needs to be shameless and bold in coming to God, and needs to be trusting in Jesus' promise to receive what we need.

We're going to pick up where we left off. If the previous parable focused on the person asking, this parable focuses on God, the character of the one giving.

So we're going to do three things. First, we're going to try and feel this parable. Second, we'll find out three reasons why Jesus says we should ask for the Holy Spirit in particular.

[6 : 0 8] And then finally, we'll return to our question that we started with. Does God actually want to give us life? So let's get into the parable. Come with me to verses 11 and 12.

Verse 11. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish, give him a serpent?

Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? The child is asking for basic food to live, a fish and an egg.

So we've got plenty of fathers in this room. So I want to ask, when your child is asked for food to live, have you ever given them something that could kill them? Confession time.

McDonald's. Maybe he's allergic to an egg. Allergic to egg, yeah. Have you intentionally given them something to kill them?

[7 : 1 9] This is like that awkward silence at weddings. Like, anyone got any objections? I'm not moving on. No. No? No. My father's just saying no.

I'm just trying to make it feel awkward. That's my only goal. Surprising. It's unthinkable, isn't it?

Why the serpent and the scorpion here? Is it just something harmful that Jesus is referring to? Well, one person reckons it's because a fish looks like a snake and a scorpion looks like an egg when it's curled up.

Yeah, anyway, that's ridiculous. Have a look at chapter 10. Chapter 10, verses 18 and 19. So it's after the 72 disciples return from preaching the gospel.

Jesus declares, They are images for the power and the instruments of Satan.

[8 : 5 1] They represent anything that opposes God and all that God has made to be good. Anything that opposes God's kingdom. But even criminals in our society give their children good things, like food and shelter, even safety protection.

And if someone in our society does give what is evil, even our unbelieving society decides that they are unworthy to continue being a father and they remove the child.

No one doubts the desire of human fathers to give their child what is good. We don't doubt it, do we? Verse 13.

Have a look at verse 13. If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

In the previous parable, we weren't to think of prayer as a mutual friend-to-friend relationship. But here we are meant to adopt the father-son relationship as the basis for prayer because God Himself is named Father.

[10 : 09] There's nothing in the parable to suggest that this is a wrong way to pray. We are meant to compare God to human fathers. But Jesus calls the fathers evil.

In what way are human fathers evil? Well, perhaps He's saying that all people oppose God and God's good ways. But whatever the case is, Jesus doesn't explicitly say.

And so that should tell us it's not His main point. He's making a bigger point than accusing fathers. Because if all people are evil, then it should surprise us that they give good gifts to their children.

It should surprise us. But we don't doubt it. None of us doubt it.

And Jesus Himself affirms that even evil fathers know how to give good gifts. Isn't that a mercy from God? None of us have had perfect fathers.

[11 : 20] But what a mercy that even evil fathers know how to give good gifts. But do you feel the sting of what Jesus is saying?

We don't doubt evil fathers. But we do doubt the only good father. How much more will the heavenly father?

Has someone ever given you something or done something for you that has just completely changed your attitude towards them? So someone that comes to my mind was my best man at my wedding.

So some of you might have met him, Sam Dacey. I actually went to school with him. But we weren't friends at school. Not for any particular reason. I just, we just weren't friends. What changed was on the post-HSC schoolies trip, there was 10 of us 18-year-olds in one house after the HSC.

You could imagine the mess. It was a bit chaotic. There was only one person who helped me in the kitchen every day. And it was Sam. And it just convinced me.

[12 : 47] He's actually a good guy. He's worth getting to know. I need to know this guy. Now that's a very small example. But in a much greater way, God's goodness is shown by the supreme quality of the gift that he gives to us.

His Holy Spirit. And we know the price of giving us this supreme gift. We know the price was the death of the very one teaching us how not to doubt in God's goodness.

God is heavenly. He is not tempted by evil. And he isn't the source of evil. He is so good that he is willing to give all of himself.

Are you surprised by the mention of the Holy Spirit here? You read the passage and you're just like, where'd that come from?

I think we expect to read what we find in the parallel account in Matthew 7. So let me just read it to you. 7-11. Now the Holy Spirit is no doubt a good thing.

[14 : 03] So it's not like these accounts are contradicting each other. But why has Luke emphasized the Holy Spirit at this point? Well, I think part of the answer is that keeping with the parable of the Son asking for food, the Holy Spirit is being portrayed as what we need to ask for in order to have life.

Why do we need the Holy Spirit to have life? Well, it's not explicitly stated, is it?

But what I'm going to do, if we let the rest of Luke's Gospel and the rest of the New Testament speak into this passage, I think we can see in this passage three reasons that it implied why we need the Holy Spirit to have life.

So we need the Holy Spirit. One, so that we can relate to God as our Father. We can know Him as Father. Two, so that we can live in and for His kingdom.

And three, so that we can participate in Jesus' mission to redeem the world. So let's go through each of these one by one. First, we need the Holy Spirit so that we can relate to God as our Father.

[15 : 25] Now, Jesus could be referring to God as Father just as His Father like He often does. But I think there's two reasons why He's inviting His disciples to have that same relationship.

Most obviously, in the Lord's Prayer or the Disciples' Prayer, we're to call Him Father. We're to address Him as Father. And secondly, the parable itself encourages us to have that paradigm, to have that way of relating to God, not as friends, but as a Father and Son.

We need the Spirit so that we can share in Jesus' relationship to God. Romans 8 tells us, You receive the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

But let's not take this for granted. I know we're used to that as Christians, but let's not take this for granted. An Iranian woman, in an article from the Gospel Coalition, she tells her story of coming to Christ in this way.

This is the first line of her story. In Islam, there are 99 names for Allah. Not one of them is Father.

[16 : 52] Like the rest of the unbelieving world, we were once an orphan in this world. Absolutely lost and alone. Unbelievers don't know they are loved.

They don't know God's love. They don't know God's providing wherever you are in all situations. They don't have that. They don't know it.

They don't have His direction, His guidance. They don't have His nurturing discipline. They don't have His promises. They don't have His family to belong to. They don't have a home to look forward to after death.

They are orphans. We were once orphans. But now we are God's children. How good is that?

That is what we are. To know God as our Father is at the heart of what is so good about our new life in Christ. But like me, don't you find yourself just forgetting that and just not acting like you are God's child?

[18 : 10] Even though we have God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, as Christians, we have it, I think we still are being encouraged here to pray in specific situations that God would help us to believe and act as His children.

We need the Holy Spirit so that we can relate to God as our Father. Secondly, we need the Holy Spirit so that we can live in and for His kingdom.

When Luke talks about the kingdom of God, he's not talking about a place. He's mainly talking about God ruling. So when Jesus teaches about the conflict between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God, it's not about two places that are conflicting.

It's about who is ruling, who is in control, and what does their control bring? Does it bring death or does it bring life? So what kingdom does the average unbelieving Australian live in?

They've got their beautiful house, very secure house, their lovely car. They've got their pets, their little pool. They go to the beach. They go on their holidays.

[19 : 26] They've got friends. They go out for drinks. They have careers. They've got their retirement. What kingdom are they living in?

Spiritually speaking, they are under the rule of Satan. They are in opposition to God's rule. They don't want God to rule. Or to use Paul's language in Romans, they are under the rule of sin.

That rule of sin and Satan is what we once belonged to. By God's mercy, we have been transferred.

We are no longer under that rule. We are now under a different rule. God's kingdom, God's rule. And that rule brings life. The Spirit has brought us into the kingdom of God.

Jesus says in John 3, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. We've been transferred.

[20 : 34] That's why we pray. Your kingdom come. We want God to rule more. We love his rule because it brings life.

We want him to rule in our hearts. We want him to rule over every single aspect of our lives. We want him to rule over the whole world because his rule brings life.

Your kingdom come. During one of my classes on Thursday, I noticed my lecturer, every now and then when he was teaching, he would just lose his breath and just give a shallow cough.

And I knew why. He's got lung cancer and he's had to have two really painful surgeries of removing parts of both of his lungs. And it just struck me.

Why on earth? With the time he's got left, is he here with us? What's he doing? I was moved by what he asked for prayer for in the weekly newsletter.

[21 : 48] He asked, pray that the cancer treatment would be effective. Shameless in coming to God. Please be effective. And ask that God would grant me length of days to serve him.

Do you think that lecturer has a good life? True life is to live for God under his rule.

And the model prayer, it tells us, it teaches us what we're to pray for in order to live under God's rule.

As his people, we relate to God as our father. We want God's name to be made holy, to be known for who he is and worshipped in our own hearts and throughout the world.

We want God's kingdom to come for God to bring his life-giving rule over all things and we want his rule to come in full with Christ. We want God's kingdom now and we want it in full.

[22 : 53] As his people, we look to our father to provide in all situations. We need our sins forgiven in Christ so that we can relate to our father without fear of punishment.

We need the grace to forgive each other because we are a kingdom of people, not just individuals. And we need to be kept from every temptation that would cause us to seek anything other than God's kingdom.

It helps us to know what to pray for to live in God's kingdom. True life is to live for God under his rule. We have been transferred by the spirit from the rule of sin and Satan to the rule of God and it brings life.

But lastly, we need the spirit so that we can participate in Jesus' mission to redeem the world. In Luke's gospel, the Holy Spirit is the one empowering Jesus on his mission.

At his birth, at his baptism. In Luke 4, when Jesus begins his ministry, how does he describe his ministry? He reads from Isaiah, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

[24 : 10] And then Jesus concludes his ministry on earth by promising to send the Holy Spirit. Then in volume 2 of Luke's gospel in Acts, there we see the disciples getting the Holy Spirit so that they can continue Jesus' mission to save people, to redeem people.

This is the same spirit that we have. Individually and together as the church, God uses our witness, our witness to the life we have in Christ to bring others from death to life.

Isn't that how you got saved? someone, a church, probably both, you just saw something different, you heard something different, you heard the gospel and you were saved.

God is using us as a church and as individuals. He empowers us. We don't do it alone. We have the spirit to continue Jesus' mission. What a life of purpose we have.

We need the Holy Spirit so that we can relate to God as our Father, so that we can live in and fall God's kingdom and so that we can continue and participate in Jesus' mission to the world.

[25 : 31] So let's return to our question. Does God really want to give us life? Well, that depends on whether what we think will give us life lines up with what God thinks.

will give us life. God is so good that he offers us his life by the Spirit, bringing us into that eternal love between Father, Son and Spirit, giving us eternal purpose in everything we do as we live under his rule and empowering us to demonstrate and declare together as God's people the wonderful gospel that saved us and he uses that to save other orphans.

Does God really want to give us life? Yes, he does. He's good. He does. Should this life by the Spirit overflow to the point of removing our desires for other things, other temporary things?

sometimes, sometimes, sometimes it will or at least it should only let those things have the intensity of desire that they actually deserve.

But God, have you seen the day outside? He gives us so much. He's the God of creation as well as redemption. He's the God of creation as well as the new creation.

[27 : 04] He so often gives us other things as well. But let's trust him. Let's trust him to decide whether we need to go without something in order to have something better.

Let's trust our Father. And if what you desire is good, then we won't have time to spend looking at this today, but you need to hear another parable.

You need to remember the parable in Luke 18 of the persistent widow. Luke says, Jesus told his disciples this parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Keep praying. Keep asking. So life by the Spirit. How should this change the way we pray?

Let me give two very particular examples because I'm really hoping that we will be very particular when we pray for true life by the Spirit.

[28 : 12] If you don't know what to pray for in a situation, ask God for the Holy Spirit. Just pray that. That's fine. That's good. But let me give you an example of how we can pray like this.

A few of you are playing soccer after this. So I know this one from experience. Why not pray that you have the assurance and just you know God is your Father, the assurance of being His child rather than having to prove yourself in the soccer field.

You don't have to be the best soccer player. You're God's child. That opposition are brothers. Not enemies.

If you see yourself and know God as your Father, it will just completely change the way you look at it. Pray for that. Pray that you would seek God's rule when you're on that soccer field.

It's not like God's rule stops before you walk out on the pitch and then once the whistle blows, then you've got to be a Christian again. Pray for God's rule.

- [29 : 22] A few examples that we know that God tells us to do which will bring life is submitting to authority, to the ref in that case.
- Pray that God would give you submission as you submit to God. Pray that you would seek the interests of others even to the point of sitting on the bench. Seek God's rule.
- Seek others to come under the life-giving rule of God if there's non-Christians on the team. Who gives a rat's poo whether you win or not? It doesn't matter.
- But imagine if God uses soccer to build a friendship that leads to conversations about life and Christ, either with you or others on the team or as a church.
- Wouldn't that be wonderful? Wouldn't that be wonderful? pray for God's life-giving spirit in everything, even in the ordinary things of life.
- [30 : 29] What about when someone tells you off for something you did? Someone has a go at you? Pray for the assurance of being God's child, of knowing God as your father.
- Your identity doesn't come from what they think of you. or what you think of you. It comes from who you are in Christ. You are a child of God.
- Seek God's rule. Don't just do whatever they tell you off for. Ask for God's wisdom to know whether that's God's will or not.
- It will help you to know whether you should accept that rebuke or not to accept it. God's rule in that situation. Maybe even pray, God help me to want correction and striving for peace.
- Pray that this conflict that's happening will result in peace. Do you see how assurance as a child of God?
- [31 : 41] God's rule, what he says, his wisdom in situations will bring life. And it may even result in unbelievers being saved. Jesus says that the love we have for one another will be a witness to the world even when we disagree with one another.
- And if it's a non-believer who's having a go at you, what an opportunity to apologise and show them the goodness of confessing sin and wrong. Don't be worried about that.
- What an opportunity God has given you to demonstrate the gospel. Or if they've wronged you to forgive them. Now I know they're very simple examples but I'm just trying to show we need to pray for the spirit in everything in life.
- in the nitty-gritty details. God is ready to give us more of his life. So let's ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find.
- Knock and it will be open to you. Let me pray. Now Father we confess that so much of what we want in life is not what you say will give us life.
- [33 : 06] Forgive us for this God. Forgive us most of all for when this makes us doubt your goodness. But God there are also things that are good and are your ways that we don't have at the moment.
- We know that we live in a sinful and broken world world where Satan is still at work. God that really hurts. Help us to trust you.
- Help us to persist in prayer to you. God please help us to trust you that you're using these painful situations to give us true life.
- To know you as our father. To have you rule over every aspect of our life. Lord even use it to bring others to have life.
- God help us to trust you. You are good. You've given us your son. You've given us your spirit. Please train us to pray for what will really give us life.
- [34 : 13] Please keep training us to be bold in coming to you for all that we need. And God ultimately we pray that your kingdom will come. We want Christ to return.

Please come back soon. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.