

Your God is Too Stingy (Part 2)

Rich Nathan
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Your God is Too...Series
1 Corinthians 12.4-11

Most Americans are familiar with the wonderful organization called “Make-A-Wish.” It started back in 1980 when a 7-year old named Christopher was being treated for leukemia out in Arizona. Christopher always wanted to be a police officer. He was befriended by someone in law enforcement who worked with other police officers to plan an experience to lift Christopher’s spirits. So, Chris spent the day as a police officer. He got to ride in a police helicopter. He received a custom-tailored police uniform and he was sworn in as the first honorary Arizona Department of Public Safety patrolman in state history.

Christopher died shortly after, but his wish became the inspiration for the world’s largest wish-granting organization. Every year the Make-A-Wish Foundation arranges experiences for children with life-threatening medical conditions. Last year over 14,000 children were granted their wishes by this incredibly generous organization and its 27,000 volunteers.

Most of the wishes involved travel. Kids get to go salmon fishing in Alaska. Some kids have gone to Italy or Hawaii. As you might guess, the #1 travel wish for children is DisneyWorld in Orlando, Florida.

But this summer a 12-year old boy named Lucas decided to use his wish from the Make-A-Wish Foundation to bless other people. You see, Lucas is from the Minneapolis area and he’s been battling Hodgkin’s Lymphoma which is a cancer of the immune system. He went through 40 days of chemo treatments in the hospital.

Lucas is a real foodie. While he was at the Minneapolis Children’s Hospital, it was really difficult for him to eat. So when Make-A-Wish said they would grant Lucas his dream, Lucas decided to serve those who have served him by getting a food truck for a day. He said while he was sick people in his church rallied around his family and brought them food and so he decided to use his wish to get a food truck so that he could serve the people in his church food. And because he respects police officers so much, he decided to park the food truck in front of the Police Headquarters every day. Lucas said, “Police officers are forgotten sometimes.”

By the way, Lucas is feeling a lot better. So he and his dad took the food truck to a Senior Citizens Center and then went to a homeless shelter. I love this! Here you have an incredibly generous organization, Make-A-Wish, staffed and funded by incredibly generous volunteers, who give a gift to an incredibly generous 12-year old boy who immediately turns around and gives the gift away.

Don't you love stories of great generosity? This autumn I've been doing a series titled "Your God is Too..." I've been talking about all of the reduced, distorted views that we have of God that keep us from fully experiencing God, that keep us from fully loving God – all of these reduced distorted views of God that keep us from fully experiencing all that God wants to give us. Today as I continue this series, my message is titled "Your God is Too Stingy." Let's pray.

A few weeks ago I quoted a pastor named AW Tozer who wrote a classic little book titled Knowledge of the Holy back in the 1950's.

Cover Photo of Knowledge of the Holy by AW Tozer

As I mentioned, Tozer opens his book this way:

What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

When you pray on the occasions that you do pray, and by the way, virtually everyone prays, even the small percentage of folks in the United States who label themselves "atheists." There was a recent Pew Survey that said nearly 20% of atheists regularly pray. It would be a fascinating study to discover why an atheist would pray. Maybe people like to hedge their bets. Maybe like believers in God, atheists find peace or relief by praying. Maybe we are hardwired by God to turn to him in times of need whatever the software of a belief system we've installed. So, if you are in the vast majority of folks who pray, how do you think about the God that you're praying to? What comes into your mind about God when you pray?

Do you think of God as being someone you need to persuade or convince of your need or your worthiness before God grants you your request? Is God like a prospective employer you've got to impress before you get the job? Is God is like a college professor who you've got to persuade to give you an extension on an assignment? Is God a negotiator who you must promise something really great in order to get what you want? Or is what comes to mind when you think about God as you pray, "I'm approaching an incredibly generous God."

God is like the Make-A-Wish Foundation, fulfilling dreams not just for a few thousand desperately ill children, but for all children – the sick and the well. God is the Make-A-Wish Foundation for teenagers, and young adults in their 20's, and folks in their 30's, 40's and 50's, and people who are in their 60's and retired, singles and marrieds. God is the Make-A-Wish Foundation for the never married, the separated, widowed and the divorced, whatever your color, whatever your ethnicity. If you want to think about God in a way that doesn't distort who he is, or reduce him down in some way, one of the first things we must think about is God's incredible generosity.

The generosity of God

So, let me ask you, is generosity one of the first things that you think about God when you approach him in prayer? You have a need and you decide to go to the God that Jesus showed us, the God that Jesus taught us about in prayer. You close your eyes and you pray. Friends, when you pray, do you say to yourself, “I’m right now approaching an exceptionally generous God?”

When you give something up in order to serve God, you give up some of your time, or your money, or your comfort; when you experience some pain in your life or some great trial in your family, some major health concern, or disappointment, or loneliness, or financial problems, is one of the first things that you say to yourself when you are experiencing that trial, “I don’t really understand why I’m going through this. I don’t understand why my loved one is going through this. But I’m going to trust that in the end it will all be OK because I am serving an extremely generous God.”

God is generous in answering prayer.

Generous in answering prayer

John Newton, the person who wrote the most famous hymn ever written, “Amazing Grace,” wrote another wonderful hymn about God’s generosity. I’ve read this to you before, but I want to read a couple of stanzas from this hymn.

*Come, my soul, thy suit prepare:
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay,*

*Thou art coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For his grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.*

How many of us really believe these words? How many of us regularly approach the Lord with any degree of confidence that God loves to answer prayer? How many of us believe that God’s grace and power are such that we can never ask too much? Isn’t it the case that when we pray we believe that God is reluctant to answer our prayers, that somehow we’ve got to persuade him to answer, show him how sincere we are. We have to trade with him, or negotiate with him so that he will answer this or that particular prayer. We explain to him why answering the prayer makes so much sense instead of a quiet confidence that God is generous. He is an extremely generous God.

God is generous in answering prayers. God is generous in his gifts.

Generous in his gifts

I looked up the phrase “God gave” and “God gives” and the “Lord gives” in a concordance recently. A concordance is a book that enables you to find every single Bible verse just using a particular word. So you can look up every single Bible verse on your favorite subject like dogs, or wine, or friends, or having a glass of wine with your friend’s dog. Of course, this is all online now. But I found the phrase “God gave,” “God gives,” and the “Lord gives” several hundred times in my concordance. There are hundreds of individual references in the Bible to God giving. You could say that the regular characteristic, perhaps the chief characteristic, of God in the Bible is that God is a giver. The God who reveals himself in scripture is a giver.

We read that God gave the Promised Land to the children of Israel. God gave the children of Israel freedom from slavery in Egypt. God gave them manna in the wilderness to feed them. God gave Moses the Law on Mt. Sinai. God gave women suffering from infertility like Sarah, Rachel and Hannah the gift of children. God gave David victory wherever he went over his enemies. God gave Solomon wisdom. God gave Daniel knowledge and understanding. God gave Nehemiah favor in the eyes of the King. God gave Paul the gospel. God gave John the Apostle the prophetic Revelation that we read about in the book of Revelation. God gave his one and only Son to us and through Jesus the Son of God, God gives the forgiveness of sins. God gives peace. God gives eternal life to all who receive Christ and believe in him, God gives the right to be called a child of God.

Friends, are you in touch with how generous God is? Do you say, “What I bank on in doing life is God’s generosity?” Do you say, “Central to my understanding of God is the notion that God is extravagantly generous?” Is that what you believe about God? Do you believe that God is generous enough to stamp every sin you confess to him “forgiven” so that you don’t have to keep beating yourself up over your past mistakes and sins?

The Bible teaches that God is so generous that he gives gifts even to the utterly unworthy. God is the one I’ve labeled in the past the Prodigal Father, who is prodigal – that is extravagant, who gives and keeps on giving in Jesus’ parable in Luke 15, a parable that we often call the Parable of the Prodigal Son. But in the story it is all about the Father’s generosity – the father gives his son the gift of an estate. Then he gives his son the gift of freedom. And he gives his son the gift of forgiveness when his son messes it all up and wastes the estate and turns his freedom into, perhaps what we would call today, addiction. And he gives the gift of a welcome home party and the gift of a fattened calf to his son, who sincerely returns to him.

And God is so generous that he celebrates when you and I turn back to the Lord. God is generous.

Generous in giving us his Spirit

One of the ways that God is generous is by giving us the gift of his Holy Spirit. In this series I’ve talked about God wanting to share his presence with us. I’ve said that God created the world in order to give us his presence so that we could enjoy him and experience him and worship him.

The way that God gives his presence to us is through his Spirit. Here is what the Apostle Paul writes.

Galatians 3:2 (NIV)

2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?

In other words, when you entered the Christian life, if you indeed entered, did you experience the Spirit? When you crossed the line from darkness to light, when you were born again (if you are born again) – you were born once physically on your birthday. But have you been born again spiritually? Do you have a spiritual birthday? The only way you could have been born again was that you experienced the Holy Spirit.

Paul says this experience of the receiving of the Holy Spirit is not just a past-tense experience. It is a present tense experience for the Christian.

Galatians 3:5 (NIV)

5 So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

That's a very weak translation. It ought to read:

Does God continually supply you with his Spirit?

See, Christians are not people who have an abstract, intellectualized belief about God. Being a Christian is not just adopting a set of beliefs or adopting a moral code. Rather, being a Christian involves something way more personal and experiential. Christians are people who are continually supplied with the Holy Spirit. We are people marked by God's presence.

Now, there are several things I would note here. First of all, Christian spirituality involves an experience of the Spirit. To be a Christian means that you've encountered the Holy Spirit and that God has taken up residence in your life. Like my dear friend, Don Williams put it:

You unzip; God jumps in; and you zip back up.

And if you haven't done that, whatever else you are, however moral you are, whatever church you attend, you are not yet a Christian. There are a lot of things you could say about Christians. You could say Christians are loving, or ought to be. Christians are forgiving, or ought to be. But that is not the defining mark of what it means to be a Christian any more than the mark of what it means to be an attorney is that you carry a leather briefcase and wear a suit to court. Or the mark being an Olympic ice skater is that you wear a short skirt and tights when you skate.

The defining mark of being a Christian has to do with whether you have, indeed, met God and experienced in your life the dynamic in-breaking of his Spirit. He makes you suddenly aware of himself and takes up residence in your life. Has that happened to you? Have you experienced the dynamic in-breaking of God by his Spirit? Have the lights gone on? Have you met God? Do you know that God is at work inside of you?

Since I'm speaking about God's generosity today, and specifically, God's generosity in giving gifts, I want to close my message by talking about four reasons why God gives spiritual gifts. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 12 which is the spiritual gifts chapter in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 12:1, 4–11 (NIV)

12 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. (NIV)

Why does God give spiritual gifts?

The gifts of God

The first reason is

To express God's generosity

1 Corinthians 12:4 (NIV)

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

The Greek word for "gifts" here is

Gifts = Charismaton

Charismaton is derived from the Greek noun "charis" which means grace. You've heard of the charismatic movement – the part of the Christian church that welcomes and puts into practice the charismaton – the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12.

Charis = Grace

So spiritual gifts are a proof of God's grace. They are the result of God's grace. A gift is the fruit, or the benefit of God's grace.

I've had conversations with people about spiritual gifts for over 40 years now. I've asked people, "Have you ever personally experienced any of the gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12? Has God ever healed someone through you, or have you ever felt like you prophesied, or gave a message from God to someone else that God spoke to you about in a dream, or a vision, or a vivid mental impression? Have you ever spoken in tongues, or had a burst of supernatural insight? Have you ever given a teaching and felt the anointing of God as you spoke? Have you ever gotten to participate in a miracle?"

Often people will say, "No. That's never happened to me."

I will ask, "Why not? Why do you think that even though you're a Christian, God has not used you in a way that is outlined in this chapter in 1 Corinthians 12?"

They'll say, "Well, honestly, I don't know. I'm a new Christian. I don't really know that much of the Bible. Or I haven't been consistent as I should be in my devotions. Or I still struggle with my temper."

Or maybe it's about someone's personality. One of the common things I hear from people is, "Well, I'm an engineer you know." That explains it. "I'm an accountant." "I'm an attorney." "I'm not very emotional." In other words, "I'm logical, analytical. I'm not the kind of person who cries easily. I'm not real touchy feely. So because of the way my brain is wired, it is hard for me to receive. I think it would be easier to receive the gifts of the Spirit if I were sort of a more loosey goosey type of person – an artist or musician or poet."

But the bottom line of what I hear from most people, if you boil it all down, regarding why a person says they don't function in the gifts of the Spirit as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12, is due to some personal defect, some failure of character, some personality quirk, some performance failure, some temperamental bias, that renders them a poor candidate for receiving spiritual gifts, especially the gifts of the more spectacular kind.

Do any of you feel this way? Can you identify with any of this? That really at bottom, you believe in your heart of hearts that you are an unlikely candidate to receive gifts of healing, or prophecy, or discerning spirits, or miracles? If you at all think of yourself as an unlikely candidate to receive these things, then you do not fully understand the generosity of God, or that all these things are gifts and not merit badges.

Let me put my cookies on a much lower shelf and state this as plainly and as affectionately as I possibly can. You say that there is something about you, that you are screwed up in some way

because of what your parents did, or your personality, or your own sins that render you an unlikely candidate to exercise these 1 Corinthians 12 gifts. I say with all affection, “Of course you are screwed up. And so am I. We will, in this life, always be screwed up. Indeed, you and I are more screwed up than we in our most humble moments ever confessed.” We really are worse than we fear. But God is more loving and forgiving and generous than we imagine.

Here’s a way to test whether you really grasp the Christian way of salvation: do you believe that someone is more worthy of receiving spiritual gifts than you are? Do you think that there is anyone else in the world that is a more likely candidate for being used by God to heal the sick, or to prophesy than you? Someone who is a more likely candidate for God to use to do a miracle than you? Maybe someone who is more emotional than you or someone less emotional? Or someone who is not as analytical or someone who is gentler or kinder, or who knows more Bible than you?

The Christian way of salvation, when you really grasp it, teaches that God has eliminated all the distinctions we normally draw between men and women in terms of our acceptability to God. You and I and the thousands of other followers of Christ who call Vineyard Columbus their church home, and the billion plus followers of Christ worldwide, we are all on the same level playing field with God. We’re all at the same starting point in the race. No one is ahead of you. No one is behind you, in terms of righteousness or acceptability or worthiness. All the distinctions between men and women who trust in Christ – our wealth, our knowledge, our relational connections, our jobs, our education, and our social skills – all these distinctions are eliminated in Christ. We are, all of us, equally qualified candidates to receive God’s gifts.

That’s why a murderer in prison who trusts in Christ to save them, or some poor guy who is a follower of Christ, but has no home, or a seven year old child who dresses up like Spiderman on Halloween – that’s why all the different people you meet, who might be followers of Christ are just as likely candidates to prophesy as is a pastor who is trained at an evangelical seminary. In fact, they are more likely candidates! That’s why the least likely candidates, in our opinions, people with funny theologies and weird mannerisms, and very affected ways of talking may press forward in certain spiritual gifts. The gospel eliminates all of our distinctions of worthiness. Listen to me, our children, even little ones can pray for the sick and see healings.

Friends, you are never going to get out of the blocks regarding spiritual gifts, unless you preach the gospel to yourself every day, unless you are rooted and grounded in the gospel, unless you are drenched in the gospel, unless before you get out of bed in the morning you say to yourself, “I am right with God today simply through my faith in Jesus Christ, not because of my performance yesterday – good or bad. I’m looking to Christ alone. So I’m a likely candidate, as likely as anyone else, to move in the 1 Corinthians 12 spiritual gifts.”

So gifts are given to express God’s generosity. A second reason God gives spiritual gifts is

To express the servant-heart of the Lord

1 Corinthians 12:5 (NIV)

5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

The attitude of a person who wants to receive spiritual gifts ought to be “Lord, I just want to serve you better and I want to serve other people better. So will you give me in this moment the ability to heal this person, or a word that will encourage?”

Many folks wonder, “Can I ask God for spiritual gifts? Can I ask God for the ability to heal someone? Or for an unusual ability to believe him for something really big? Or for a message that will really encourage? Am I allowed to ask?”

Many folks say, “Well, you know, the gifts that I have, have already been determined by God. After all 1 Cor 12.11 says:

1 Corinthians 12:11 (NIV)

11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

And in 1 Cor 12.18 we read:

1 Corinthians 12:18 (NIV)

18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

...and so since God determines what gifts I get, and I’ve never been used to heal anyone, or spiritually discern the presence of a demonic spirit. My gift is the ability to remember TV theme songs. My gift is the gift of colors. I’m really good in matching colors. My gift is the gift of shopping. How many of us have the gift of complaining? I’m really good at complaining.

Or whatever it is.

And it all sounds so very humble. “If God wanted me to speak in tongues he could do that to me. I’m open.” I’ve heard people say that for years. “I’m open. Here I am. If God wants to use me to heal the sick, here I am. I’m open. I’m available. But it’s apparent that God has sovereignly determined otherwise.”

Do any of you feel that way? I guess God has determined that you won’t be given gifts of healing or the gift of prophecy or the gift of miracles?

Listen, God is sovereign over people’s salvation, but he uses the means of us preaching the gospel to save people.

God has commanded us to bear witness to Christ in our workplaces, our families and our schools. Paul asks in Romans 10, *“How shall they hear without a preacher?”* God is not going to hold us responsible for whether someone gets saved, but we are responsible for our refusing to witness. God will hold us responsible for our refusal to share the gospel with people around us or being unwilling to at least extend an invitation to church. He says whoever is ashamed of me, I will be ashamed of him.

God is sovereign. He’s sovereign over everything. He’s sovereign over our food. He’s the one who provides food for everyone on the earth. But God expects us to pray to him for our food. We read in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:11, *Give us this day our daily bread.* God expects us to work to get our food as Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, *if anyone will not work, let him not eat.* God expects us to share our food with those in need. As Paul says in Romans 12:13, *Share with God’s people, who are in need.*

Students, God is sovereign over your tests. But he expects you to study and to work hard and to pray before your exams and not just go in and say, “Well, you know, whatever I get is up to God! I have no control over my grades.”

God is sovereign over our money, but he commands us to be a good stewards, to use wisdom in our purchases, to not fritter our money away on the latest fashions or the latest iPhone with 2 new features.

God is sovereign, in other words, not only over results, but the means of obtaining the results. And regarding spiritual gifts, we will not be able to stand before God on the Day of Judgment and say, “Well, Lord, you sovereignly determined to not give me the gift of healing. It’s not my fault that people around me remained sick and weren’t helped or healed. You sovereignly determined to not give me gifts of discernment. It’s not my fault that people around me with demons were not set free. It’s not my fault that people around me weren’t encouraged or strengthened or comforted. You sovereignly determined to not give me the gift of prophecy.”

The Lord on that Day will say to you and to me, “Did I not command you in 1 Corinthians 12:31

1 Corinthians 12:31 (NIV)

31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Did I not tell you to excel in gifts that build up the church? Did I not say to you in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to zealously pursue spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy?

1 Corinthians 14:1 (NIV)

14 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.

Did I not give you example after example of my servants in the Bible that sought me for more of my presence, and more of my power? My servants were not just open to my presence. My servants didn't say, "Well, if you want to, fine." My servants sought me and pursued me. Consider my servant Moses who wasn't satisfied with his experience with me, but he prayed earnestly that he might see my glory. Have you not considered Elisha, who would not leave his master, Elijah's, side, but stayed by him that he might receive Elijah's gifts and power when I took Elijah up. Have you considered my servants Peter and John who after experiencing the gift of my Spirit on the Day of Pentecost kept pursuing me for more? They asked me for more boldness in Acts 4 to speak my word. They prayed that my hand would be stretched out to heal and to perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of my Son Jesus."

Friends, God's sovereignty over spiritual gifts can never be an excuse for you or me failing to ask for what we presently do not have. You do not have gifts of healing, ask for them. You do not have gifts of discernment, ask for them. You do not have the gift of prophecy, ask. You need a miracle, ask. Jesus says, "Ask and it will be given; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

Here is the third reason for giving us spiritual gifts.

To express God's power

That word "working" in v. 6,

1 Corinthians 12:6 (NIV)

6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

...suggests powerful working, or dynamic working. Spiritual gifts are ways that God dynamically powerfully works through his church. Someone is healed or converted and we say, "That's God at work."

I want to close by emphasizing the fourth and final reason why spiritual gifts are given by God. That is

To express God's the invisible kingdom

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV)

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Spiritual gifts are called "manifestations." So we're seeing the words used here, Paul says that God generously gives gifts. They're not merit badges like for the Boy Scouts. We don't earn the ability to heal the sick by being moral people, or by our spiritual good deeds. Spiritual gifts are expressions of grace. Spiritual gifts are services. They're designed as ways for us to help other

people, to serve others. And we must ask for them. They're workings, powerful activities of the omnipotent God in and through a person.

Finally, they're called "manifestations." Manifestations of the Spirit. By manifestations the Bible is talking about something that makes the invisible God visible. Something that takes God who has heretofore been an intellectual abstraction, faraway, distant, living on planet Mars somewhere; this vehicle called a spiritual gift becomes a way for that distant, far-off abstract God to become near and real.

So, let me close with this thought. Folks say today, "I struggle with believing in God. If God is real, why doesn't he show up? Why doesn't he manifest himself so that we'd know that he is there? How can I believe in an invisible God?"

The Bible says that God does manifest himself. The invisible God has made himself visible, first of all, through Jesus Christ. John 1.18 says this:

John 1:18 (NIV)

18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

"But you know, Jesus lived a long time ago, Rich. I wasn't around when Jesus walked on the earth. Is there any ways that the invisible God makes himself visible today?"

The Bible says that there are two ways that the invisible God makes himself visible in the 21st century. 1 John 4.12 says this:

1 John 4:12 (NIV)

12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

One of the most real tangible ways that people experience God today is by observing God's love in the church as Christians love one another. My secular Jewish mother, who lives in New York, met a member of Vineyard Columbus at a funeral. She discovered that this woman goes to a church pastored by her son. Well, this Vineyard Columbus church member's husband had a rare form of cancer which was supposed to have killed him a decade ago. But God has had mercy on him and he's been miraculously preserved way longer than the doctors predicted.

But this cancer really affected this man's body. And so the church rallied around this family and completely rebuilt their downstairs so that this guy could easily get around in his wheelchair. The church has generously come around the family in a dozen different ways.

My mother often asks, "You know, that friend of yours, is he still alive?"

I always say, "Yes, Mom, he is."

She goes, "That's incredible."

I will describe something that a church member has done for this family and she'll say, "WOW. Why do they do that?"

I say, "Mom, they do it because of their relationship with God."

A way that the invisible God becomes visible in the 21st century is as Christians love each other in the church.

But the Apostle Paul says the final way that the invisible God becomes visible is through spiritual gifts. They're manifestations. They're like electrical lights. When you flip on the switch, the current which has been invisible up till then, comes on. You have this stream of electrons that you can't see, this current going into your house – when you flip the switch that invisible current of electricity is suddenly manifested. We have light and it is the presence of invisible power in our home. And when we employ spiritual gifts, God's invisible presence is manifested in the church. To a secular culture that finds it hard to believe in God, God reveals himself through spiritual gifts.

God is generous. He is generous in answering our prayers. He is generous in giving us his Spirit. And he is generous in giving us his gifts. Ask for his gifts to operate in your life. Let's pray.

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- II. **The gifts of God**
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