

GOD'S GOOD GIFTS

by Charles C. Ryrie

The Loving Father knows what gifts are best for His children, and lovingly He grants them in answer to prayer.



"What did you bring us?" was the question they always greeted me with. My children, that is, when I returned from a trip, no matter how short my time away had been!

And when they were younger, I usually did bring them something. I missed them, and I wanted them to know that I was thinking of them.

Sometimes they would ask before I left home for something distinctive of the place where I would be. And they counted on their loving father to give them what they asked for.

Our heavenly Father is a loving Father too, and He delights to do things for His children in answer to their

prayers. Jesus spoke often of prayer, urging His disciples to express their desires and assuring them that their heavenly Father would answer. "Ask....seek....knock" He said on one occasion, and promised that God would respond with "good gifts" (Matthew 7:7-11).

Indeed, Jesus seemed to foresee even my bringing gifts to my children when I came home from trips when He said, "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" My actions, and those of thousands of other far-from-perfect par-

ents, give assurance that our perfect heavenly Father will answer our prayers with good gifts.

But who hasn't asked the question, "Why aren't my prayers always answered?" Actually, they are, and always with "good gifts." The question is not, Does God always answer prayer?; the question is, Do we always recognize His good gift?

Two illustrations underscore Jesus' promise. No earthly father would give his son a stone when he asked for bread, or a serpent if he asked for a fish. Although a stone looks something like a round loaf of bread and a serpent something like a fish, to often such substitutes would not only be deceitful but could be dangerous. And God's answers to our prayers are never deceitful or dangerous.

I was always careful about the kind of gifts I brought my young children. I remember once planning to go to a place where firecrackers were legally sold. My children knew that and begged me to bring them some. But firecrackers can be dangerous. A three-inch scar on my leg is a constant reminder to me of that fact. Besides, they are illegal where we live. Nevertheless, my kids

begged and begged. But as a wise parent I did not grant their request. Firecrackers are not good gifts for children.

But when I returned minus firecrackers, their displeasure was made all too evident, and all my wise and logical explanations were to no avail. Today they understand. They realize that saying no is often the kind thing to do. They know it isn't always good to have everything we might want.

God knows that too, and with perfect knowledge and with infinite love for each of His children. Wisely He withholds some things. Lovingly He delays sometimes. For reasons He cannot explain to us until we reach heaven, He sometimes says a loving no.

But whether the answers to our prayers come immediately and are just what we asked for, or whether the answers are delayed, even for years, or whether He gives answers we did not expect, or whether He answers with a no, all these answers are His "good gifts" to us. And He knows what is best.

In the meantime we continue to ask, seek and knock, trusting Him fully to give us what is best.

