

## **“The Gift of Life”**

“I feel incomplete!” The words were nearly lost as waves of pain rushed from Kathy’s broken heart, only finding their final escape through her tears. Her face declared youth and innocence, but her eyes shouted the truth of the pain that dwelled within.

Time after time the tragedies of life have poured out from broken hearts through the shared experiences of those I have sought to comfort during counseling. Almost always there exists a sense of loss; a lack of wholeness erodes away any possibility of peace.

Yet in the midst of the stormy ocean of people’s lives, I have witnessed the presence of God bring calmness which comes only through salvation in Jesus Christ. The broken pieces of their lives are put back together. The darkness is filled with light as the death bond of sin is broken when God gives “The Gift of Life.”

Through Christ their sins are forgiven forever. They become one with God in Christ, and this makes them a part of the Spiral of Life from which all Life flows. This dynamic Spiral is perhaps best understood by examining the relationship within the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It would be pretentious to claim understanding of the Trinity, and yet we are compelled to learn more about God so our love for Him might grow. As we seek this Truth it is important to state that in no way does the personhood of God destroy His unity.

We worship one God, but at the same time he has revealed Himself as three Persons. His own intra-relationship, as revealed in scripture, holds for us a special understanding of what He has planned for us, evidenced by adopting us as His children. (Romans 8:15-17)

The Old Testament speaks of God as “Our Father,” (Isaiah 63: 16) “A Father to the Fatherless.” (Psalm 68: 5) Jesus often referred to His Father in Heaven, and He told us that He was also our Father. (Matthew 7: 21; 5: 16) Through Christ we can begin to understand what it means to have God as our Father. What does having God as your Father mean to you?

(Write response)

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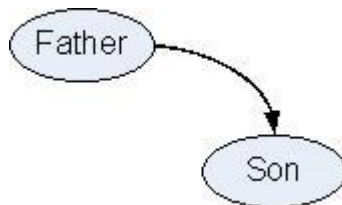
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Consider this statement: “The Jesus you want is the Jesus you get.” Challenge came to live on the doorstep of my mind with increased intensity due to this comment.

There was only one place to go to discover whether I had a rationalized impersonation of Christ residing in my mind, or a scripturally based understanding of the true Son of God. That “place” was the Bible. The further knowledge of Christ that I encountered opened up some new doors of understand about the relationship between Jesus and His heavenly Father.

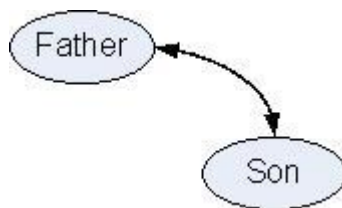
First, we see that God sent His Son into the world. (John 3: 16 – 18) The Father handed over all things to the Son. (Luke 10: 22; John 3: 35)

Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me: (John 5: 19, 20, and 30)



Jesus relies upon his Heavenly Father for all things and he lives an obedient life surrendered to the will of the Father. (Also read Philippians 2: 5 – 11; John 12: 49, 50). As we begin to diagram this relationship we see an arrow representing the giving and receiving between the Father and the Son.

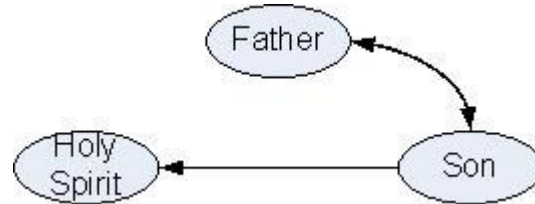
We can also make the arrow point in the opposite direction which illustrates the giving by Jesus of his total life to the will of the Father, for the purpose of glorifying the Father.



(“And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” John 8: 29; “These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up his eyes to Heaven, He said, ‘The hour has

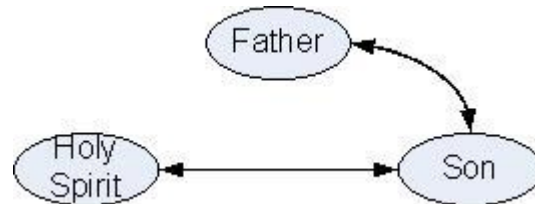
come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,...” John 17: 1) Here we see a perfect relationship of giving and receiving.

Next, we draw an arrow between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This represents the surrender of Jesus to the leadership of the Spirit. The Spirit reveals to the Son the will of the Father and empowers Him that it might be accomplished. “And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness...” (Luke 4: 1)



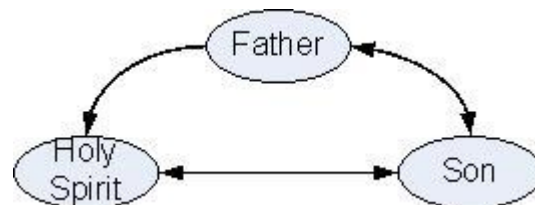
From His beginning in the womb of the Virgin Mary to His death on the Roman cross, the life of Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gave the Son all that the Father had for Him.

Here we add the second arrow indicating the giving of the Holy Spirit to Christ during his “emptied” (Phil. 2: 6), and surrendered life on Earth. This adds a much deeper meaning to the words of Jesus, such as Matthew 6: 33, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.”



Jesus was not simply speaking from a pedestal of omniscience, but from personal experience. He had trusted His Father for all things, and His Father had never failed to give Him all that His purpose on earth required.

Now we can think about the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father. We first see the Spirit doing the will of the Father during creation as He was “moving over the surface of the waters.” (Genesis 1: 2) Other scriptures tell us of God sending His Spirit upon men so they can carry out the will of the Lord. (Samuel 10: 10; Isaiah 42: 1; Ezekiel 11: 5; Zechariah 7: 12)

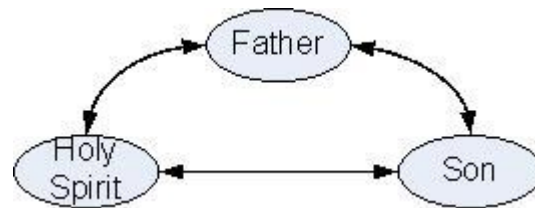


Jesus made specific reference to the “Father” sending His spirit. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11: 13)

“But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” (John 14: 26)

What the Holy Spirit teaches us will be what He hears from the Father. “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.” (John 16: 13)

With these scriptures in mind we add an arrow from the Father to the Holy Spirit, and since we see that all the Spirit does is in accordance with the will of the Father, we also can draw a line from the Holy Spirit to the Father. Here we see the Spiral of giving and receiving becoming complete within the unity of the Trinity.



It is important to again emphasize that the personhood of the Trinity in no way destroys the unity of God. Along with every other seriously searching follower of Christ, my wish is there was an understandable explanation for the existence of the triune God within easy grasp.

Such an explanation still escapes me. Therefore, we can only seek God’s truth as it is revealed in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit. For me, a key source for that search is the Bible and prayer.

The design of this Spiral of Life in Christ, however, is not intended to explain the Trinity. When we consider the scriptures above, some anxiety may arise concerning the co-equality of the Trinity. At the same time, we cannot disregard such passages as John 14: 28: “You heard that I said to you, I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.”

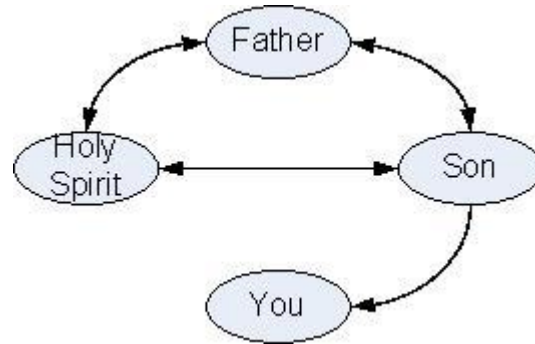
Jesus exemplified the totally surrendered life. There was no one before Him, nor anyone since who has lived such a surrendered life, “Tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4: 15b)

His life showed us what it is like to have God for your Father. He set the perfect example for us. Part of what the above scriptures show us is the way that God has chosen to minister to us through Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is so we might better understand the workings of our relationship with Him in Christ.

The significant factor that is being lifted up in this life Spiral is the perfect relationship of giving and receiving demonstrated in these passages of scripture between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Where this type of giving and receiving relationship exists there is no room for “taking!” The beautiful truth is

that God has reached down into this sinful world and made it possible through Christ for us to be born anew.

Here is where all of the above becomes intimately applicable to our lives. First, we draw an arrow from the Son to people – “You” (those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior). This arrow represents all that Jesus has given to us.



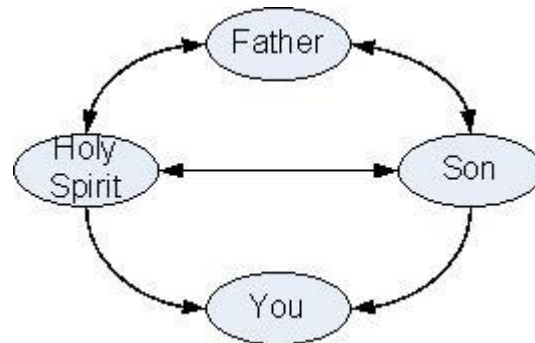
“...for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; ...” (John 17: 8a)

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; <sup>23</sup>I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” (John 17:22,23)

Indeed, Jesus gave all that He was to us, even to the point of death on the cross.

Next comes the arrow from the Holy Spirit to “You”.

“But when He, the Spirit of the truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you.” (John 16:13, 14)



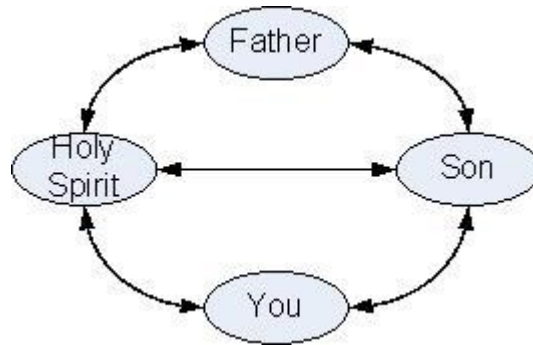
The Holy Spirit gives to us all that He has for us from the Father and the Son.

Remember, Jesus came as the suffering servant, but that did not make Him any less than Son of God, the Word incarnate: God. What is illustrated here points to the complete giving that God shares with us through the ministry of the Son, and the Spirit.

Pay close attention to the change of the last two arrows added below. This change represents our giving to God.

We are to be completely committed to Christ, entrusting our lives with Him for the forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. We are to give Him all that we are and possess; thus, the arrow also points from “You” to the Son.

But there is also required our complete surrender to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. We are to give ourselves absolutely to the Holy Spirit, even as Jesus was led by the Spirit while here on Earth. So we change that arrow as well.



This then calls us to a relationship with God of giving and receiving; not taking. We are free from any need to consider what we might get from God, or take for our own use, because we are a part of this Spiral of Life in Christ where we are continually receiving all that we need from God.

This in turn, equips us and enables us to give back to Him. He has made us one with Himself through Christ, children of God (John 1:12), adopted, and coheirs with Christ (Romans 8:15-17)! We who were incomplete are made complete in the Son, by grace through faith, it is the gift of God.

Consider the wholeness brought into our empty lives by this love-centered gift of God Himself. We receive the wisdom to be obedient in partnership with Christ so the knowledge God gives us through the Spirit is always used in the best way possible.

This helps shape our values, and aids us in making the choice to follow Christ as complexity and difficulty confront us within life’s circumstances. In the Son we receive a present and future filled with hope. With this purpose we have a greater sense of direction as we seek God’s will for our lives, regardless of life’s present turmoil.

The Holy Spirit helps us to learn from the past by revealing to us those weaknesses which exist in our hearts, and enabling us to realize that God’s way is the answer because He always knows what is best. He helps us to be in touch with His leading, to know the true thoughts of God’s heart.

All of this makes the present worth living as we enjoy freedom in Christ. Jesus desires for us to have life, and to have it abundantly. (John 10:10) If we follow the Spiral of the gift of life, giving and receiving, then we will find the fullness of Life that God has for us on a moment by moment basis.

That fullness will be discovered in the love that God has for us, and the love that he enables us to have for Him. But for most of us there remains some confusion concerning the way this love is given and grows. One reason for this is because of the vague understanding that we may have about love. The next chapter deals with this question. But before we begin, let's give ourselves two minutes to write down our answer to this question: "What is love?"

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