

Once a friend of mine changed the oil on my car. I know that's supposed to be a simple job but I know as much about cars as the Air Force says it knows about space aliens. I told the guy I was amazed at what he could do; here's what he told me: "You can do anything if you just use your tools." He did not have a large toolbox, but he knew what to do with what he had.

When Jesus sent his disciples into the world, he equipped them with the tools they'd need. Today you'd expect them pack several suits, sweaters, toiletries, prayer books, textbooks about Christianity, a map, a range rover, a cooler, an ATM card, a laptop and a fax so they could stay in touch with headquarters. When someone leaves on a business trip, we expect them to take along more rather than less, just in case.

So it's surprising especially to our modern ears to hear Jesus' instructions: "Take nothing except a walking stick. No bread, no bag, no money. Wear sandals and don't wear two coats. That's it. Have a nice trip. Send me a postcard." For Jesus, less is more. Having less enabled the disciples to concentrate on God, not on the baggage. Having less enabled them to draw charity out of others.

In our prayer, we often show God how small our toolbox is. We tell God what we don't have, what we've lost, and what we want. They're good prayers, but they pretend to know more than God does. We think we can serve God better with more equipment. But in almost every life, God has removed something from our toolbox. It may be money or possessions; it may be a spouse or a family member; it may be a skill you wish you had; the health you used to have; or the way you used to pray. God sends us on our journey without some of the basic equipment it seems obvious we should have. We think we'd be happy if we had it. But we have what God thinks we need. Having less, we can meditate more. Having less we can draw charity from others.

When we lack something, we often just grumble about it, or we pray God to end our complaint. But there's another way to pray; we could ask God how to use what we do have. We can do anything if we just use our tools.