

# The Joy of Giving

## Topic

Giving

## Theme

Joyful giving benefits both the giver and the receiver.

## Desired Learner Response

The learners will give to the Lord with a joyful spirit.

## Materials

- Resources 1 and 12

## Scripture Focus

2 Corinthians 8:16–9:15

## Summary

This lesson reveals that Paul sent a team to Corinth to administer the collection, and he encouraged the Corinthians to give joyfully.

## Outline

- I. The Administration of the Gift (2 Cor. 8:16–9:5)
- II. The Benefits of the Gift (2 Cor. 9:6–15)
  - A. Blessings to the givers (9:6–9)
  - B. Thanksgiving to God (9:10, 11)
  - C. Provision for the needy (9:12–15)

## Memory Verse

*"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).*

## GETTING STARTED

Use the following activities to focus your learners' attention on the theme of giving.

### Two Sides of the Same Card

Distribute three index cards and a pencil to each learner. Tell the learners they have ten thousand dollars to spend on luxurious items (e.g., cruise, hot tub). Ask them to record one item on each index card. Then have them prioritize their cards from most desirable to least desirable.

Have the learners share their spending wishes with those next to them. Ask the learners to share with each other why they prioritized their spending desires in the way they did. Then instruct the learners to turn their cards over and write "God" on each card. Point out to the learners that often we forget to consult God when it comes to spending money. Have the learners turn the "God" side of their cards face up. Every choice to spend money should go through the grid of God's desires. He should be consulted first.

Have the learners turn their cards over again so their luxurious items are facing up. Tell them that when we consult our wants and desires first, we are ignoring God and turning our backs on His will for the resources He has given to us.

### It's Just What I Always Wanted

**ASK:** What is the best gift you have received from a friend or family member? (Q1)

**ASK:** What acts of giving have brought you great joy? (Q2)

Today's session reminds us to give to the Lord, an act of giving that brings true and lasting joy.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. The Administration of the Gift (2 Cor. 8:16—9:5)

In 2 Corinthians 8:16 Paul began to discuss the appropriate method of handling the Corinthians' gift. Once the offering was collected, it would need to be delivered to Jerusalem. Titus was to have a major part in this. Paul had referred to Titus in 2 Corinthians 8:6, then spoke of him again.

Titus shared Paul's eagerness for the Corinthians to participate in the gift. Paul thanked the Lord for Titus's eagerness and exhorted him, therefore, to go to Corinth to manage the collection. Titus was so eager to help that he volunteered and would have gone even if Paul had not asked him to do so (8:16, 17).

Paul was also sending another Christian to help with this offering. Since Paul didn't identify him by name, we can only guess who he was—perhaps Luke, Silas, Timothy, Mark, or someone else. Whoever he was, he had a good reputation among the churches (8:18) and had been chosen by the churches to help Titus



raise the funds for the Jerusalem saints (8:19).

Paul instructed the Corinthians to provide things honest in the sight of others as well as in the sight of God (8:21). It is not fair to ask one person to count the offering by himself. Paul knew this, so he instructed others to help in the collection.

Since this was a large offering, Paul added a third helper (8:22) to the team. This person, too, was a mature believer, whom Paul had *oftentimes proved diligent in many things*. He, too, had been selected by the churches for this work (8:23).

**ASK:** Why was Paul wise to send more than one person to receive the offering? (Q3) *So no one would be able to accuse him of financial misconduct.*

**ASK:** What guidelines do you think a church should follow in the collecting and dispersing of funds? (Q4)

**ASK:** What character qualities should a congregation look for in those who handle their finances? (Q5) *Honesty, love for the Lord, and wisdom.*

Since Titus was Paul's personal helper and the two others were official messengers of the churches, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to show them proof of their love (8:24), that is, to demonstrate by their liberal gift that their love was genuine.

**ASK:** What correlation exists between a believer's giving and his or her love for the Lord? (Q6) *Giving is an outgrowth of one's love for the Lord.*

Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:10 that the previous year the Corinthians had begun to collect this offering. Because they had started well by committing to give, Paul had been able to point to them as a fine example when he talked to the Macedonians (9:2). Their commitment had stirred the Macedonians to action.

**ASK:** How might our church discreetly use personal testimonies about giving to spur members to give? (Q7)

Since Paul had boasted about the Corinthians to the believers in Macedonia, he did not want the Macedonians to go to Corinth and find that the Corinthians had failed to complete what they had started. If that should happen, both Paul and the Corinthians would be embarrassed.

Thus Paul sent Titus and two other believers ahead so they might help the Corinthians get ready for his arrival in Corinth accompanied by some Macedonians (9:3, 4). He wanted their gift to be one of liberality and blessing, not the stingy variety that comes from a covetous heart (9:5). Paul exhorted them to give generously rather than grudgingly.

## **II. The Benefits of the Gift (2 Cor. 9:6–15)**

Paul listed three benefits of Scriptural giving.

### **A. Blessings to the givers (9:6–9)**

The first of the three benefits applied to the givers. The givers would receive a blessing. Paul referred to an Old Testament principle in Proverbs 11:24 and 25.

Modern tractors and corn planters are equipped with computers by which farmers can program the number of corn kernels they want to plant per acre. A farmer would be foolish to set the planter to plant half the usual amount. If he did, he could expect only half the usual crop. Giving is like sowing seed. Paul wrote, *He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully* (2 Cor. 9:6).

We do not lose what we give. If we sow bountifully, we will reap bountifully. We will reap with blessing. The benefit comes not only to those who receive the gift but also to those who give it.

**ASK:** Acts 20:35. **READ:** What did Jesus say about the blessing of giving? (Q8) *The blessing of giving is greater than the blessing of receiving.*

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 12. **ASK:** What blessings does a cheerful giver reap? (Q9) (Record learners' answers on the right side of the resource.) *Eternal reward; souls saved at home and abroad; seeing others rejoice.*

**ASK:** Describe a time when giving brought blessing to your life. (Q10)

**TESTIMONY:** If gardeners or farmers attend your class, ask them to share briefly their experiences related to sowing seed and reaping a harvest.

Giving should not be an immediate response to an emotional appeal. It should be planned ahead of time. Paul wrote, *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give* (2 Cor. 9:7). Emotional giving often leads the giver to later regret his or her rash action. Planned giving never does. Giving should be deliberate, not casual.

**ASK:** How much thought and planning should go into giving to the Lord's work? (Q11) *All our money belongs to God. We should not spend it or give it without talking to Him about it first.*

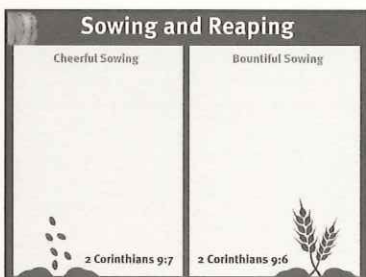
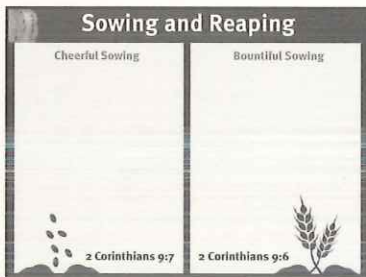
Giving should not be done *grudgingly* (9:7). This word speaks of grief or sorrow. *Of necessity* speaks of compulsion. Giving should not be reluctant or compelled. It should be voluntary.

Paul described the kind of giving God commends. *God loveth a cheerful giver* (9:7).

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 12. **ASK:** What does it mean to be a cheerful giver? (Q12) (Record learners' ideas on the left side of the resource.) *Finds joy in giving to God; trusts God to meet his needs; consults God about money; seeks opportunities to give.*

**ASK:** If you cannot give cheerfully, should you stop giving until you can be cheerful about it? Explain. (Q13) *The solution is not to stop giving, for that would be sin, but to find out why your giving is not cheerful and to deal with that problem.*

The idea of cheerful giving is not so much that God loves a hilarious giver (a giver who has lost control of his wits) but that He loves a giver who finds joy in giving. God approves of a giver who finds real pleasure in giving to the Lord's work.





**ASK:** Why must a giver be cheerful to please the Lord? (Q14) *A person who is not giving cheerfully has a heart that is not right with God.*

God can give us the gracious desire to be generous, and He also is able to supply the means to do so (9:8).

**READ:** 2 Corinthians 9:8. **ASK:** What motive for giving might the teaching *you cannot out give God* appeal to? Should such teaching be a part of Christianity? (Q15) *Greed. No.*

Giving to get more money in return should never be a motive for giving. In fact, such a motivated giver will most likely be disappointed. A pastor once preached on giving. He told his congregation God would bless them tenfold if they gave. One man put a thousand-dollar bill in the offering. When he was not blessed with ten thousand dollars in return, he sued the church. This is not the kind of giving God commends!

In 2 Corinthians 9:9 the apostle quoted Psalm 112:9, which paralleled Paul's present topic. *He hath dispersed abroad* conveys the imagery of a sower scattering seed. *He hath given to the poor* reminds us of the purpose of the Corinthians' collection. *His righteousness remaineth for ever* speaks of the righteousness (the act of giving) of the godly believers, the one who fears the Lord (Ps. 112:1).

### **B. Thanksgiving to God (9:10, 11)**

A second benefit of the gift, seen in 2 Corinthians 9:10 and 11, is thanksgiving to God. God supplies the sower's seed and bread for food. He does this by sending rain for the crops, which makes an increase of seed both to plant the next year and to eat during the present year. These blessings result in thanksgiving to God.

It was hard for Jewish believers to accept Gentile believers. But when they saw the gift that the Gentile believers had gathered for them, they would realize that the Gentiles were sincere in their beliefs, and they would accordingly give thanks to God (9:11).

**ASK:** How well does a person's giving to the Lord prove that he or she believes God's Word? (Q16) *Giving faithfully and generously shows obedience to God's Word and serves as a proof of one's confidence in it.*

**ASK:** Would you expect the per-person rate of giving to be higher in a Bible-believing church than in a church that denies the fundamentals of the faith? Explain. (Q17)

### **C. Provision for the needy (9:12–15)**

The third benefit of the gift was that it would meet the needs of the poor believers in Jerusalem. It *supplieth the wants of the saints* (9:12). This was a practical benefit of the offering. It would buy food and clothing for the poor believers in Jerusalem. We may not think of giving as a ministry, but Paul did. He looked upon this giving as a religious ministry by the Gentile churches to the Jewish church. The Jewish Christians in return would come to love the Gentile Christians and to pray for them (9:14).

In the early part of 2 Corinthians 8, Paul referred to Christ as an example of giving. As he concluded this section on giving, he referred to Christ again. He said, *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift* (9:15). We should thank God for material blessings to meet our daily needs. But most of all we should thank God for Jesus Christ, Who met our spiritual need.

**ACROSTIC:** Divide the learners into teams of three. Give each team a sheet of paper and a pencil, and instruct the teams to list for each letter in *GIVING* as many words as possible that describe how Christians ought to give.

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

Use the following activities to help your learners decide to give more cheerfully and generously to the Lord.

### Personal Reflection and Evaluation

**ASK:** What three words describe your giving over the past year? (Q18)

**ASK:** Are you cheerful when giving? If not, what is keeping you from being a cheerful giver? Encourage the learners to ask the Lord for His grace to help them remove any obstacles that are keeping them from being cheerful givers. (Q19)

**ASK:** How often should a person evaluate his or her giving? (Q20) (Have the learners evaluate their giving practices using the checklist under question 21 in the study book.)

Waves of Grace	
By God's grace I can ...	7.
1.	8.
2.	9.
3.	10.
4.	11.
5.	12.
6.	13.

### Summary and Memory Verses

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: By God's grace I can give to God cheerfully.

Encourage your learners to memorize 2 Corinthians 9:7. Give them an opportunity to quote the verses in class next week.