

THE CHEERFUL GIVER

by Brian Hackman and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that always having enough of everything; you may share abundantly in every good work.

II Cor. 9:7-8

FAITH STORY:

I Corinthians 9:6-15

FAITH FOCUS:

The point of Paul's message to the Corinthians is this: those who contribute generously, receive generously. Because God has graciously given us so much, we can give to others. Paul gives principles of giving to the Corinthians. He says, "Don't give reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (verse 7).

SESSION GOAL:

To challenge students to give to others generously, willingly and graciously.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- Read the passage three times and reflect on it
- Articulate what they believe the meaning of giving is
- Will perform a skit on how society misconstrues the true meaning of Christmas

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 The movie, *Les Miserables*. Show the movie from the beginning and play it until the next scene—approximately 10 minutes.
- 2 Paper and pencils
- 3 Dry erase or chalk board
- 4 Invite one or more guests from your congregation who are willing to talk about the giving they do, either of their finances, time, or talents. Ask them to read the passage prior to class and be prepared to reflect on it in relationship to their personal experiences in giving. Ask them to reflect on how they have been blessed by God.
- 5 Bibles for each student

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (10 minutes)

Welcome students to class, then explain that they will be watching a clip from *Les Misérables*. Ask students to be watching for how the priest demonstrates gracious giving to the ex-convict.

CONNECT: (5–7 minutes)

After the movie clip, lead a discussion based on these questions:

- Do you think the priest was right in letting the ex-convict, Jean Valjean, stay the night at his house and giving him such hospitality?
- If you were the priest, would you let the ex-con stay at your house?
- How do you think Jesus would have responded to Jean?

Transition statement: Let's look at what Paul said to the Corinthians about giving.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15 minutes)

Divide students into small groups. Ask each group to read the passage three times. After the first read-through, ask the groups to answer this question:

What's the main point of this passage?

After the second read-through, ask groups to answer this question:

What's the point of being a cheerful and generous giver?

After the third read-through, ask groups to answer this question:

What's the point in this for you personally?

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)

Invite your guests to share their stories of giving—why they give, how it feels, how they have been blessed in the process. In what ways does their personal experience bear witness to this passage from Corinthians?

Invite students to ask questions. Help the students and your guests connect with each other. The best way to learn about giving is to see it modeled by other people.

RESPOND: (10 minutes)

Ask students to open their Bibles and choose either verse 7 or 8 to memorize. Give them some time to memorize the verse, then practice saying the verses.

Talk together as a class about a giving project you can do together.

Some options:

- Giving money—bringing offerings every Sunday and giving it to a project of their choice
- Giving time—visiting and doing work for elderly in the congregation, working in a

shelter for the homeless—the possibilities are endless.

- Giving abilities—participating in worship services, cleaning the church, welcoming new people on Sunday morning.

Close by saying the key verses one more time.

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE:

George Shillington in the *Believers Church Bible Commentary* writes about the sources that Paul used to illustrate his messages. Shillington says that “Paul’s agricultural metaphor of sowing and reaping was currently being used in Greco-Roman and Jewish writing of the time. The ancients were masters at mixing farming metaphors into their own view of life.”

The Jews used similar agriculture imagery throughout the entire book of the Old Testament. In order for Paul to come up with his own illustration for the opening point of this passage, he used much of the well-known agricultural imagery familiar to the Jewish people: the more seed a person plants, the more crops they will reap at harvest time. Paul uses this obvious principal and compares it to giving. Those who give liberally will reap a generous reward in God’s kingdom.

And why should we give liberally? Because God has been generous to us. James 1:17 says: “Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” God is the author of everything good, and God doesn’t change.

Another story of generous giving is found in Mark 12:41-44, the account of the poor widow placing two small copper coins in the offering. She gave all that she had—the most generous offering a person can make.

WORKS CITED:

NRSV Harper Study Bible. Lindsell, Harold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989

Believers Church Bible Commentary, II Corinthians. Shillington, V. George. Herald Press, Scottdale, PA, 1998