

GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: 2 CORINTHIANS 9



Everything we do, including our giving, should spring from grace.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Cheerful giving is grace-motivated giving. Paul had written earlier to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:1-3) and asked them to give an offering for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. In this letter Paul wrote to remind them to complete the work of giving they had begun and offer the gift they promised cheerfully. Paul reminded them that everything comes from the Lord by His grace. Even the act of giving is the result of a work of grace. It was Paul's desire that their faith be stirred so that their giving would bring them joy and be offered cheerfully.

Generous giving flows out of God's generosity to us. When we understand that everything we have comes from God, it is much easier to give it away. God supplies both the seed and the harvest. He is the one who makes us rich so that we might be generous on every occasion. Our giving is a demonstration of thanks to God. We thank Him for what He has given us by giving it away! When we give to others, we are actually participating in God's generosity to them, which results in their giving thanks as well. Our giving is an expression of thanks toward God, resulting in others giving thanks toward God!

Grace-motivated giving results in praise to God. When we give to others, it results in their hearts going out to us. They will be grateful and thankful for us. When we give to others, it also results in praise and thanks to God. Paul knew that the Christians in Jerusalem would also offer prayers of thanks to God for the Corinthians.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Paul was excited about the cheerful giving of the Corinthians. He was not excited because it was an empty work, but because it flowed out of their "confession of the gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 9:13).

Our giving will not get us to heaven. Rather, our giving should be out of thanksgiving for our salvation and in confidence that our heavenly Father will provide. The giving of the Corinthians resulted in thanksgiving to God from Paul and from the recipients of the gift. Because of the cross, God is able to make "all grace abound" (2 Corinthians 9:8) to us so that the treasures of this world no longer have a grip on us.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 53:9

Connecting the passage to Christ:

In Matthew 27:57 we are told that Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph. Jesus was crucified among thieves, died among thieves, and was assigned a grave among sinners. Isaiah 53 paints the picture of the passion and suffering of our Lord. It is interesting to note here that a rich man became a disciple of Jesus. His transformed heart is evident in the generous giving of his own tomb, which had never been used. Joseph also displayed great courage to go before Pilate and ask for the body of Jesus. Where as others deserted Christ, Joseph, a converted rich man, cared for our Savior's body. Our money, placed under the submission of the King, can be used to advance the kingdom.

Questions for reflection:

- How does the second half of Isaiah 53:9 also speak of our Savior? (Jesus never lied or was violent.)
- Why didn't Jesus fight back when they crucified Him? (Jesus willingly died that He might be crucified and was cursed to take the punishment that we deserved. He did this with joy, in spite of the great suffering, out of love for us.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

FRESH COOKIES

Supplies:

Bake fresh cookies
(Make a cookie that does not contain nuts.
Chocolate chip cookies
or gingerbread cookies
work well. If you can
use an on-site oven and
have a volunteer bring
them warm into class,
the aroma will add to the
exercise.)

Use this exercise to demonstrate giving and resulting gratefulness.

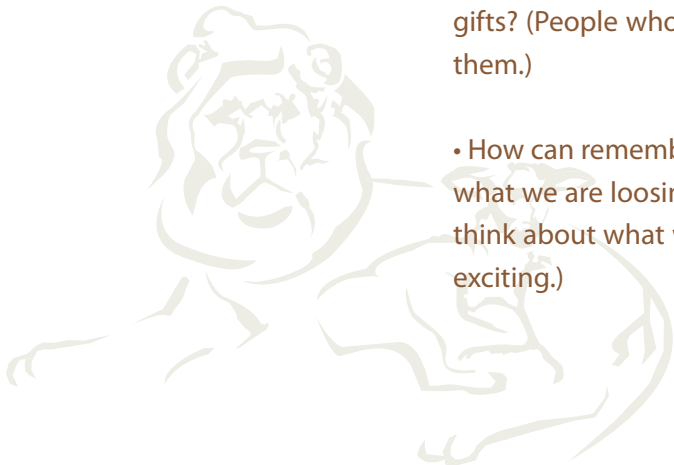
Explain to the class that God provided money for you and your family and, because you wanted to share with them some of that blessing, you baked them fresh cookies!

Pass out the cookies and then ask a few of the children to pray a prayer of thanks. Listen to their prayers. They are likely to pray with genuine thanks as a result of your gift. While the children are eating, ask them the following questions:

- How was my giving of the cookies an expression of my thankfulness to God? (You recognized that God supplied you with money and, out of thankfulness to God, you wanted to share that.)

- How does our giving cause thankfulness toward God in the people who get our gifts? (People who receive our gifts thank God because it is God using us to bless them.)

- How can remembering these things help us to be cheerful givers? (If we focus on what we are losing we are not likely to be cheerful in our giving. If, however, we think about what we are giving on behalf of God to others, giving can be fun and exciting.)



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A GIVING CHRISTMAS

Read the following story to the class and then draw them out about what happened in the story.

A Giving Christmas –

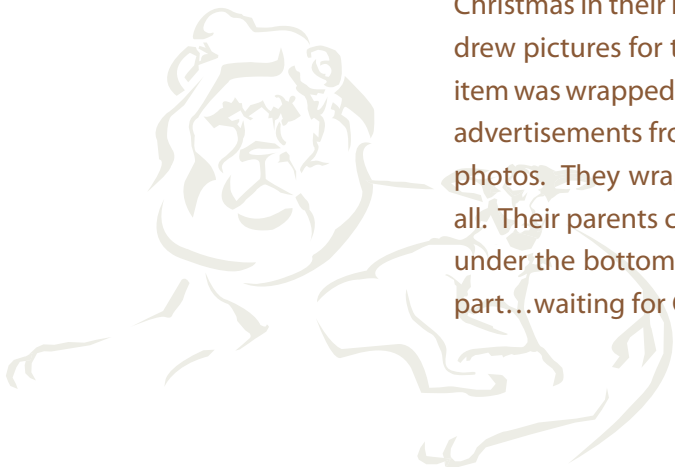
As Christmas drew near, twin sisters Mary and Alice began to get more and more excited. At first they thought about all the fun activities around the holidays. They remembered the Christmas lights from last year and decorating the tree, and trying to fall asleep on Christmas Eve. This was the first Christmas they could really remember the previous Christmas. They were now five years old!

Their mom asked them if they had any special gift they might like to receive. Excitedly they both talked about the gifts they might like to receive. Later that night, as they were about to drift off to sleep, Mary asked Alice a question that would change Christmas for those two sisters for the rest of their lives.

“What do you think mommy would like?” she asked. The two girls whispered ideas back and forth until they talked themselves to sleep. For days afterwards Alice and Mary continued their secret conversations. They had so much fun thinking of different gifts to give. Finally, they decided on a plan.

They wanted to fill a stocking full of gifts for both of their parents just like their parents did for them. They didn't have stockings for their parents, so they decided to fill their parents' boots with gifts. They would make gifts, wrap them up, and hide them. Then, on Christmas morning, they would wake up extra early, set their parents' boots on the fireplace, and fill them with the gifts they made.

The last two weeks before Christmas became the most exciting two weeks before Christmas in their lives. They prayed about what they could give their parents. They drew pictures for their parents and gave them some of their favorite things. Each item was wrapped carefully in custom made wrapping paper or tissues or Christmas advertisements from magazines. They gave away their favorite toys and their class photos. They wrapped up the loose change they were saving - fifty two cents in all. Their parents could use it to treat themselves on a date! Soon the empty space under the bottom drawer of their dresser was full of gifts. Then came the hardest part...waiting for Christmas.



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On Christmas morning they woke up early. They had not been able to sleep well because they were so excited. They removed the bottom drawer of their dresser, stuffed their parents' boots full with the homemade gifts, and sat them on the fireplace. They never even thought to open their own gifts! They just wandered back to bed and soon fell back asleep.

Eventually their parents woke up before them and wandered into the living room. Imagine their shock when they saw the boots bulging with so many gifts! After rousing their daughters, they took time to pray and thank God for giving. None of them had opened up a single gift, but they were all filled with joy from giving. Mary and Alice have stuffed their parents' boots full every Christmas since.

- Why is giving a double blessing? (When you give you are blessed by giving and the person you give to is blessed by what you give.)
- How are we like God when we give? (Generosity is one of the ways the image of God finds expression in our lives. We were created to reflect the generosity of God. God gave us Jesus, His only Son. Anytime we freely give, we are demonstrating God's grace.)
- Use this short story as an introduction or wrap up to talking about the 2 Corinthians passage.

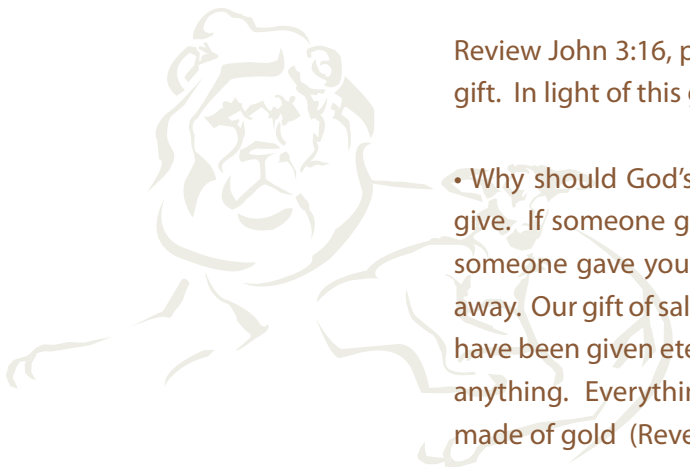
GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

Ask the children to tell you what the best gift they ever received was. Make a list on the board. Draw them out about Christmas and their birthdays.

Then ask them, "What was the greatest gift of all time?"

Review John 3:16, pointing out how Jesus was God's son, given to us. Jesus was a gift. In light of this great gift of God, we should be filled with gratefulness.

- Why should God's greatest gift motivate us to give? (Great gifts motivate us to give. If someone gave you a dollar, you would likely keep it and spend it. But, if someone gave you twenty million dollars you would be likely to give quite a bit away. Our gift of salvation is worth more than all the money in the world! Christians have been given eternal life where we will eat, drink, live, and never have to pay for anything. Everything will be free (Revelation 21:6). In heaven, the streets will be made of gold (Revelation 21:21).



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a picture of a joyful man sowing a lot of seed. Write the words "Sow generously" across the top of the picture and "God loves a cheerful giver." across the bottom.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

THE RICH AND POOR OF THE BIBLE

Break the class down into six groups. Have each group evaluate one of the following stories and talk about how the people in their assigned passage relate to this passage on giving in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

Zacchaeus – Luke 19:2-8

The rich man – Luke 12:16-21

Mary – John 12:2-9

Widow – Mark 12:41-44

The rich young ruler - Matthew 19:16-26

Joseph of Arimathea – Matthew 27:57-60

Review each passage and what we learn from it about our wealth. Finally, talk about 2 Corinthians and the unique things we learn from this passage that can help us give out of grace. Remember, we have something that the people in the above stories did not have. We have knowledge of the gospel plan of God. We, who have been given such a treasure as the gospel, must be generous.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Offering for Jerusalem. The poor in the city of Jerusalem were experiencing real hardship. Paul mentions this collection in Romans 15:25-28. The offering had been started by the Corinthians a year earlier, but, for some reason, was not completed (2 Corinthians 8:10-11 and 9:2). The offering is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 where Paul asked the Corinthians to set aside money each Sunday to be added to the offering.

