

# HILARIOUS GIVING

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*By the Book*™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study  
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## Let's Begin

*Luke records a parable Jesus told about a certain rich man whose crops were so abundant, he found it necessary to tear down his present barns and build new ones to store his harvest (Luke 12:16-21). As the man contemplated blessings bestowed upon him, he chose not to pass along blessings to others.*

*Instead he focused on self-preservation, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (vv. 17-19). Jesus responded by dubbing him a fool. Not only did the man live selfishly, even the selfish life he lived would soon come to a tragic end.*

*A life without giving is a life without meaning. The Lord Jesus Himself remains the most visible proof as we learned last week (8:9). Jesus' life was a life of giving. And, since life is in large part measured by giving, it seems the more generous we become, the more meaningful our life.*

*No chapter in the New Testament is so rich in exhortation concerning generous giving than 2 Corinthians 9. Paul goes so far as to equate generous giving with "hilarious" giving. What does the Apostle mean when he speaks of "hilarious" giving? How can we know if we are giving with "hilarity"?*

*As we begin our study of 2 Corinthians 9, let's follow the outline below:*

- I. The First Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Readiness (vv. 1-5)**
- II. The Second Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Bountifulness (vv. 6, 8-11)**
- III. The Third Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Cheerfulness (v. 7)**
- IV. The Fourth Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Thankfulness (vv. 12-15)**

## I. The First Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Readiness (vv. 1-5)

Paul informs us about the kind of giver God loves, "for God loveth a cheerful giver" (v. 7c). Interestingly, the term translated "cheerful" is the Greek term *hilaros*, which is used a single time in the New Testament. Though we get the English term "hilarious" from this Greek term, the word is not indicative of being overcome with laughter as is our English term. Instead the term implies a happy, cheerful state of mind. In other words, God loves the giver whose gifts are motivated from a cheerful heart.

### Reflection Connection

*Does your giving pattern reveal a condition of generosity or a condition of covetousness? Explain.*

The first ingredient required for a cheerful heart is *readiness*. Note the Apostle's words. "For I know the forwardness of your mind...and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren... Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a *matter of bounty*, and not as of covetousness" (2 Cor. 9:2-5).



While Paul judged it “superfluous” to write to the Corinthians concerning giving (v. 1a), he nonetheless would not presumptuously assume they had already prepared the love gift to be taken to Jerusalem. Why would Paul press for the fulfillment of their promise? Two reasons are clear.

*First, Paul desired to avoid embarrassment.* After all, the Corinthians’ zeal had “provoked very many.” They had become, as it were, a shining example to other churches, promoting generosity for the collection everywhere. Hence, even the appearance of hypocrisy was out of the question. The value of our testimony as believers cannot be overestimated. Someone well said a Christian is the closest some people are ever going to get to Jesus. Therefore, if our testimony does not ring true, reflecting sound heavenly music, then it is possible some persons may not ever pursue Christ for the single reason they could not discern Him from our weak, flawed testimony. Do we desire the blood of men and women who will spend eternity in hell upon our conscience?

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In addition, the Apostle Paul found himself bragging to others about the Corinthians’ generosity. His boast would lose all foundation if the Corinthians stalled on their promise to give. While we do not compete with other Christians, we are inspired by each other’s service (Heb. 10:24-25).

*Second, Paul desired to show enlargement.* He specifically says the collection was to be, “as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness” (v. 5). He urged the Corinthians to give generously, indicative of a worthy offering and not an offering motivated by mere duty. Giving is an expression of the state of our heart. Giving serves as a barometer, measuring the heat of one’s love, the temperature of one’s commitment to Christ. In essence, giving can reveal two conditions: generosity or covetousness. Which condition characterizes your heart? Is there a readiness, an unshakable willingness to generously give as Christ generously gave?

## II. The Second Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Bountifulness (vv. 6, 8-11)

Paul uses a familiar metaphor to communicate the second required ingredient for cheerful giving, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (v. 6). The harvest clearly communicates the truth of bountiful giving. As the farmer reaps what he sows, so givers reap what they sow. The proportion of reaping is determined by the proportion of sowing. If more seed is sown the probability exists that a bigger harvest will be gathered.

However, on Kingdom soil, when more seed is sown, we have a guarantee from heaven more harvest is given. God tells Israel through the prophet Malachi, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour



you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*" (3:10). God's bounty is graciously given to bountiful givers.

In addition, Paul clearly explains that the believer suffers no lack when his or her heart is willing to generously give. Why? First, because *the seed itself is provided*. Note again the Apostle's words, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work... Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness..." (vv. 8, 10). God gives an inexhaustible provision to His children. Independent of circumstances, God provides the seed.

Second, not only is the *seed provided*, but also *the seed is planted*. He multiplies "your seed sown." All true giving is sowing. Every Christian must examine himself or herself and ask, "Am I planting seed in God's work?" If no seed is planted, it is neither because there is no seed to plant nor is it because the seed cannot be planted. God provides for His harvesters!

Third, not only does God *provide* the seed and *plant* the seed, but He *prosper*s the seed as well. The seed will "multiply"; the seed will "increase." God prospers the seed (v. 11). Rather than impoverish us when we sow seed, God promises to enrich us. Giving generously procures for us special blessings from God.

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### III. The Third Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Cheerfulness (v. 7)

To understand what makes giving hilarious, we have so far discovered two main ingredients: *readiness* and *bountifulness*. We now consider a third—*cheerfulness*. As we learned above, our English word "hilarious" comes from a Greek word which basically means "cheerful." And, cheerfulness in giving is more about the quality of giving rather than the quantity of the gift. That is why, for example, the widow about which Jesus spoke gave cheerfully even though the amount—a mere two mites—was so small (Luke 12:2-4). Jesus concluded her amount, in essence, surpassed all the Pharisees together! Cheerful giving transcends the ledger books. Cheerful giving is about quality giving, not quantity giving. Cheerful giving is not about what is given but about how it is given. Hence, cheerful giving expresses a person's heart, not a person's fiscal status.

Indicative of Paul's exhortation to give is his focus on the negative. He insists our gifts must lack both "complaint" and "compulsion." If we give with sour, grudging attitudes, we immediately reveal our heart's condition. Begrudging what we



### Reflection Connection

*Reflect for a moment about the practice of your church during the collection times. Do you think an atmosphere of joy and celebration exists? Why or why not? Be careful to be respectful during this time of sharing.*

give forfeits both bread and blessing. The harvest will suffer the much dreaded drought. Hence, the crops will fail.

Neither are we free to give out of necessity. Imposed giving is forced giving. As we learned from chapter 8, giving is considered a matter of grace in Scripture (8:7). Therefore, since grace cannot be forced without gutting its meaning, neither can giving be forced without gutting its meaning.

God loves the cheerful giver. Collection times during worship services would be a lot different today if Christians considered giving as a matter of grace, giving as cheerful, giving as hilarious. A spirit of joy should mark the times when God's people pass the offering plates. Songs of celebration should be proclaimed! God honors faithful sowers, generous givers.

## IV. The Fourth Ingredient for Hilarious Giving is Thankfulness (vv. 12-15)

Now that we have considered three ingredients which makeup hilarious giving—*readiness, bountifulness, and cheerfulness*—let's consider our fourth: *thankfulness*. Paul sums up his argument, "For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:12-15).

True giving remains at the core of Christian worship. And, thankfulness strikes the heart of true giving. Indeed nothing is more beautiful than a thankful Christian. Paul makes two basic assertions about thankfulness in these verses.

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*First, those who get will be thankful* (vv. 12-13). The Jerusalem believers would "glorify God" because of the Corinthians' "liberal distribution" to them. Because Corinth is generous, Jerusalem is grateful. And, because Jerusalem is grateful, God bestows grace! The circle of God's blessings continue to spread around God's Kingdom. When we give in Jesus' name, every prayer of thanksgiving reminds heaven of our gifts. Note, however, this is not a "give-to-get" type of arrangement. Instead, it is simply the fruit of living godly lives for the glory of God.

*Second, those who give will be thankful* (v. 15). As we give, our hearts inevitably thank God for making it possible for us to give. We are thankful for the privilege of giving and for the blessings giving brings to our lives. We give because He gave. He is our highest motivation for giving and our only reason for receiving. In order to be a hilarious giver, we must remain thankful deep within our heart.



### Golden Greek Nugget

Paul sums up the chapter with a fitting benediction, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” (v. 15). The term translated “unspeakable” is the Greek term *anekdiegetos*, used only here in the New Testament. Furthermore, the Greek is a composite of the noun *ekdiegeomai*, meaning “to declare” or “to express” and the prefix “a” which normally, when combined with another term, makes the term negative. Hence, it means “inexpressible” or “indeclorable.” Undoubtedly, the marvelous gift to which Paul refers is the magnificent Son of God.

### Wrap Up

*In this study, we have learned what Paul meant when he said, “God loves a cheerful giver.” Are you a cheerful giver? Do you count giving a privilege you enjoy? When giving, is your attitude focused on a minimum amount? God loves cheerful givers! He desires Christians to give because they want to—not because they have to.*

