

HILARIOUS GENEROSITY

STUDY ONE

A Needed Return to Joyful Generosity

Selected Scriptures

Being a generous person is far more fulfilling and rewarding than being a selfish person. Happier is the giver than the getter.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Joy has a way of catching people by surprise. Let's say you're holding an infant when she opens her eyes, gazes at you, and then grins. Suddenly, what do you feel? *Joy!*

Your eyes light up. Your face beams. Love warms your heart, and you can't keep from smiling back and laughing with delight.

People can pursue happiness for years and never attain it. But joy hides in the creases of daily life—whether we're holding a baby, singing a praise song in the car, or lending a hand in Jesus' name to someone in need. Unexpectedly, joy leaps into our hearts, and we can't hold back a smile.

In these *Searching the Scriptures* Bible studies, you won't find steps to joy like some books offer keys to happiness. That's not how joy works. You will, however, find inspiration and instruction from Scripture on living generously. Why generosity? Because, when you give, joy will catch you by surprise. As the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed [and brings greater joy] to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35 AMP), and He knew what He was talking about. You'll see!



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Do you need a joy lift? If so, talk to the Lord about it. Write a prayer below, inviting the Lord to guide your study of His Word and fill you with His joy.



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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The scriptural centerpiece of joyful giving is [2 Corinthians 9:7](#). Read this verse in a few Bible versions, and then write down Paul's instruction and his reasoning, including something to do and something to avoid.

This verse has a backstory. A year earlier, the prosperous church in Corinth had pledged to send much-needed aid to the struggling, persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. Gentile believers from Corinth showing generosity to Jewish believers in Jerusalem would powerfully demonstrate the oneness of all believers in Christ.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, in part, to remind them of their promise and to urge them to gather some funds for him to collect on his next visit. "You should finish what you started," Paul urged (8:11), and he sent some fellow missionaries ahead to make certain of they did (9:4).

While passing the collection plate, Paul passed along some guidelines on giving that believers have followed ever since.



Observation: Giving Guidelines and Examples

Observation is the foundational phase in *Searching the Scriptures*. Ask yourself, "What does the passage say?" Take time to notice the context, action, and dialogue. Observe commands, statements of truth, contrasts and comparisons, and cause-and-effect. Accurate interpretation depends on careful observation.

Guidelines on Giving—2 Corinthians 9:7

First, giving is a personal matter. "You must each decide," Paul said (2 Corinthians 9:7). How do Christians decide how much to give? By consulting a rulebook or obeying someone's dictates? What was Paul's guideline in the first part of [2 Corinthians 9:7](#)?

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Second, how we give is just as important as how much. What contrast do you see in the second part of *2 Corinthians 9:7*? Explain the difference in attitudes that Paul describes.

Everything comes from God. The breath in our lungs. The beating of our hearts. The ability to see, hear, taste, smell. These gifts are all from the Lord who cheerfully gives. He loves it when we follow His model, and we give cheerfully.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Examples of Cheerful Givers

Cheerful givers light up the pages of Scripture. In the following chart, write down the people's actions in one column and the people's attitudes in the other.

Givers	Actions	Attitudes
The Israelites <i>Exodus 35:20–29</i>		
The Returned Exiles <i>Nehemiah 4:1–6</i>		
The Magi <i>Matthew 2:9–11</i>		

Although the settings and circumstances were different, these cheerful givers had a lot in common. What similarities do you see in the spirit of their generosity?

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The magi gave with joy. It was a festive setting. They were delighted that the star led them to the Child and that they could worship with their gifts.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: What It Means to Give “Cheerfully”

In [2 Corinthians 9:7](#), Paul used a unique Greek word to portray God’s ideal giver—*hilaros*, from which we derive *hilarious* in English. This word doesn’t appear anywhere else in the New Testament. How would Paul’s readers have defined this word? Let’s explore its meaning.

Use your Bible study resources to define *hilaros*. You can look up the verse in a [commentary](#) or look up how [paraphrases](#) of the Bible translate the word. Write down what you find.

Paul’s word, *hilaros*, is the antithesis of “reluctantly or in response to pressure” (9:7). Have you ever felt reluctant or pressured to give? Describe in your own words a *hilaros* giver who gives freely from the heart.

Now, widen your lens to view the context. Paul pointed to the Macedonian believers as models of *hilaros* in [8:1–5](#). What characteristics described their spirit of giving?

God blesses those who give willingly, voluntarily, and without obligation.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: Jesus—The Ultimate Giver

Correlation hunts for similar principles in other Scriptures to deepen our understanding of a passage. No one gave as much and with more generosity than Jesus gave. What do you find in [Hebrews 12:2](#) regarding our Lord's giving heart?

What insight did Paul add in [2 Corinthians 8:9](#)?

Reflect on Paul's guidelines and the models of joyful giving in Scripture and write down a timeless principle or two on giving. A principle is a timeless statement of truth that applies to everyone. Here's a sample:

“When we give generously and with joy, we reflect the gracious nature of our Lord, who freely gave Himself for us.”

God's gift of His Son is generous beyond measure. He gave as an act of love, motivated by joy, resulting in forgiveness . . . and a life of generosity in those who follow Jesus. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Application: Practical Steps

If the light of joy has faded from your giving practices, here are some steps to restore the glow.

Reflect on God's gifts to you. Where would you be today without God's saving grace? He gives you health, an occupation, a home, family to love, friends to enjoy. Stimulate the giving spirit in you by naming God's gifts. What blessings has God poured from heaven into your lap?

Remind yourself of His promises. God blesses a generous giver. "The one who plants generously will get a generous crop" (9:6). Paul's rule of thumb is to "give in proportion to what you have" (8:11), and then trust God to fill the cup we poured out for the benefit of others. What promise can you claim as you give? Here are some verses to ponder: *Matthew 6:3–4; Luke 6:38; 1 Timothy 6:18–19.*

Ask some probing questions. Does your giving match God's blessings? Invite the Holy Spirit to help you decide how much you should give. What is your heart telling you? What resources—not just money but also time, talent, and knowledge—has God given you to help build up the body of Christ? What need do you feel drawn to meet through your giving?

Change whatever keeps you from being a generous follower of Christ. Generous giving builds our faith in a God who loves to multiply our meager loaves and fish into a bountiful meal for all. How can you make generosity a way of life?

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When we share God’s gifts with joy, an amazing thing happens—*worship*. “When [you] take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God” (2 Corinthians 9:11). Through our giving, God is praised—which is the highest form of joy.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You, the greatest Giver, gave Your only Son to meet the greatest need in the world. He sacrificed Himself for my sin. I give out of the storehouse of blessings You have showered upon me. Guide me into a life of generosity and joy. In Christ’s name, amen.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2015, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

