

Bible Studies for Life: May 26

The Joy of Giving • 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

By Carl White



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Lewis then writes that the ideal Christian society has neither

passengers nor parasites, “swank or side.” In other words, no airs or conceit. Rather, Christian society is marked by radical obedience and cheerfulness (see *Mere Christianity*, pages 83-87).

Our focal text for today touches on both obedience and cheerfulness, presenting three principles for the Christian in making the ideal Christian society.

The Principle of Sowing and Reaping

Generosity is our goal, for when we are generous, we are being like Jesus, our Lord, our Savior, and our model. There is both a negative and a positive application of this principle.

Negatively, small givers see small results. Using an agricultural metaphor, Paul points out the relationship between sowing, casting seed on the land, and reaping, gathering a harvest. Sow small, reap small. The same is generally true in giving. Give small, reap small. I say generally because we must remember the parable of the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44). Her gift was small, but the consequences of her gift were larger than life.

On the positive side, large givers see large results. Sow generously and, in general, you will reap generously. Again, Paul uses the agricultural metaphor. Yet, the amount you give is not the final determiner of how you will reap. There is something much more important than the amount, and that is the intent.

The Principle of Cheerfulness.

The word translated “*cheerful*” in verse 7 is literally “*hilarious*.” God loves a hilarious giver. By comparison we can glean what Paul means with this unusual word. Hilarious giving is not reluctant giving, nor is it giving under compulsion. It is freely giving, even to the point of being counterintuitive. In other words, it is giving not based on anything at the

surface level, but based on what your spirit is hearing from the Holy Spirit down deep in your heart. It is giving that makes you laugh.

Look this up in your thesaurus. The word money is not found in the list of words meaning happiness. It is also not found in the list of words meaning peace, nor contentment. But in God's Holy thesaurus giving is in the list of words leading to cheerfulness.

Tennis star Chris Evert retired at age 31 at the top of her game. She won 18 Grand Slam titles in her amazing career. In an interview with *The New York Times* she said, "I've had enormous success, but you have to find your own happiness and peace. You can't find it in other things and other people. I'm still searching." (May 21, 1986, Section B, Page 13)

Success, money, fame; these often do not bring joy, but cheerful giving – giving that is not done grudgingly nor done under compulsion, can.

The Principle of Sharing

Cheerful generosity has a result that works on several levels. In verse 12 Paul points out two results. First, the Corinthians generosity would result in meeting the needs of others, the recipients of their giving. That is rather obvious. When you give to a local charity that supplies food for the poor, you are facilitating distribution of food to those who need it.

Second, in a less obvious manner, there will be people who are giving thanks to God. I remember when I was first in seminary worrying about how I was going to pay my tuition much less my books. I went to the business office and discovered that I had no balance. I owed them nothing. An anonymous donor from my home church had given money to the school for me and did so every semester. I was grateful, to say the least.

Finally, generosity has the potential to open hearts to the Gospel of Christ. *"Others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ"* (vs.3).

The world has changed significantly. People no longer readily hear our testimony. We must earn the right to be heard. Hilarious giving opens doors.

White is a member of Pineview Church, Clinton.