

THE GRACE AWAKENING
STUDY FOURTEEN

The Charming Joy of Grace Giving

2 Corinthians 8:1–9; 9:3–8, 13–15

Once you truly get a taste of grace, you will develop an appetite for giving. You really won't need another message on it. It will have captured your heart.

—Charles R. Swindoll

GRACE and giving go hand in hand. We might even say that giving is grace with an *outstretched hand*. Think of the ways God stretched out His gracious hand to us. He gave us His only Son to bear the penalty for our sin. He forgave us, bestowed eternal life, gave us the Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance in heaven, and “blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 1:3).

God keeps on pouring His bountiful gifts from heaven to earth like the mighty Niagara Falls pours water out of Lake Erie into Lake Ontario . . . and He doesn't expect us to pay Him back. How could we? We couldn't give back to God anything equal to His blessings any more than we could reverse Niagara's flow. No, God's gifts of grace are free, and He gives them with joy!

We may not be able to give *what* God gives, but we can give *like* He gives—with hearts of joy. When we give out of obligation motivated by guilt, our giving is mechanical and cheerless. However, once God's style of giving gets into our bloodstream, we develop an appetite for giving, even an addiction. The joy from giving propels us to give more!

As we'll learn in this study, our hearts reflect God's heart when we give with joy, and He takes special notice. As Paul wrote, “God loves a person who gives cheerfully” (2 Corinthians 9:7). Let's look closer at this verse and Paul's teaching about giving with joy in 2 Corinthians 8–9.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

The Charming Joy of Grace Giving

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Would you like to experience such joy? Open your heart in prayer and ask the Lord to pour into you His cheerfulness so that His Spirit flows through you when you give. Jesus invited us to pray for joy:

“I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. You haven’t done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.” (John 16:23–24).

Use the space below to write your prayer.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In this study, we’ll make four observations about the joy of giving from Paul’s teaching in 2 Corinthians 8:1–9:6. Then we’ll uncover four principles about giving as we interpret Paul’s words in 9:7–14. Finally, we’ll join Paul in praise in 9:15, as he lifts our gaze to the greatest of all grace gifts, Jesus.



Observation: What Makes Giving so Addictive?

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, in part, to urge the believers in Corinth to send aid to their Christian brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. The mother church in Jerusalem had fallen on hard times, and the Jewish Christians there were in desperate need. When the wealthy Corinthians who lived in southern Greece, also called Achaia, first heard of the need in Jerusalem, they promised to open wide their purses when Paul’s envoys arrived to take a collection. In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul reminded them to fulfill their pledge.



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An Example of Giving with Joy

To inspire liberality, Paul recounted the generosity of the impoverished Christians in Macedonia, who contributed not out of their surplus but out of their lack. To locate Macedonia, Corinth, and Jerusalem, refer to the maps in your Bible. Or go to the “*Paul’s Missionary Journeys*” map on the Insight for Living Ministries website. Notice the distance Paul and his team would have to journey under perilous conditions to deliver the collection to Jerusalem. What city names in Macedonia do you recognize from Paul’s other books in the New Testament?

With these locations in mind, read *2 Corinthians 8:1–5*. Write down the statements that describe the poverty of the Macedonian believers in contrast to their openhanded, joyful generosity.

How could these suffering believers give with such joy? Before they gave their money, “their first action was to give themselves to the Lord” (*2 Corinthians 8:5*). Their devotion to the Giver of all grace overflowed in their giving grace to others. They begged Paul “again and again for the *privilege* of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem” (*8:4*, emphasis added).

“They first gave themselves to the Lord.” You see, that’s it! That’s where grace resides. Not in a wallet. Not in an income. Grace resides in the heart. And it touches the poor as well as the rich. If there’s grace, there will be generosity. —Chuck Swindoll



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Reasons to Give with Joy

Paul was making the argument that if the impoverished Macedonian believers could give with joy, then so could the wealthy Corinthian believers. But why should they? Why is giving with joy so important in a believer's walk of faith? Paul offered four reasons.

Notice the first reason in *2 Corinthians 8:7*. Alongside what virtues did Paul list giving?

To Paul, generosity was just as central as faith, knowledge, and love . . . and, in fact, it helps us *keep a healthy balance* so that we don't just accumulate blessings, we give them as well. Generosity is the litmus test of the genuineness of our love (*2 Corinthians 8:8*).

Can you find another reason in *2 Corinthians 8:9*? What do you observe?

When we give with joy, we *model the same grace as Jesus Christ* who offered Himself not out of obligation but joy (*Hebrews 12:2*). By giving with grace, we more closely emulate the generous grace of the Savior.

Look closely for the third reason in *2 Corinthians 9:1–5*, particularly verse 5. What pitfall was Paul hoping their generosity would help them avoid?



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Paul stoked the fire of the Corinthians' desire to give because he worried that greed might have snuffed out their enthusiasm. From this we observe that *generosity counteracts selfishness and covetousness*. Generosity loosens greed's grip.

Paul illustrated a fourth reason in 2 Corinthians 9:6 through an object lesson. What is the metaphor, and how does it apply to giving?

Giving prompts more giving as we receive God's blessings in return (Luke 6:38). Why should we give with joy? Because we *become increasingly more generous* the more we give, and the joy multiplies!

I believe when the heart is right, generosity comes. It's not just a matter of the economy. It's a matter of the heart. It's certainly been true in my life. My concern does not have to do with amounts or percentages, but with attitude. —Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: What Makes Grace so Attractive?

Now let's uncover some principles for grace-based giving according to Paul's teaching. A principle is a timeless statement of truth that applies not just to the people in Paul's day but to us as well. Read 2 Corinthians 9:7–14 and write down the principle about grace and giving that you learn from the following four phrases. We've filled in the first one as an example.

"Each decide in your heart how much to give" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Grace frees us to follow the Spirit as He moves in our hearts, and we don't need to compare our giving to others. Grace individualizes our giving.

"Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure . . . [give] cheerfully" (9:7).



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“God will generously provide all you need” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

“As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God” (9:13).

Grace-based giving removes the hooks of guilt and obligation that dig under our skin and make giving downright painful. It eliminates the one-size-fits-all approach that imposes a strict percentage and doesn't allow God's Spirit to move in our hearts. Grace frees us to seek divine guidance and plan our giving based on how God stirs us as individuals. In the end, God gets the glory because He is working through us. Others learn by our example. The relationship between giver and recipient deepens. Grace frees us to enjoy giving!

Wouldn't it be great if when the offering plates were passed in church we heard laughter? Why not? Deep within our hearts there is not compulsion but laughter. From the Greek word for cheerfully we get our word hilarious. God loves a hilarious giver! —Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: What Makes Christ so Superlative?

In his epistles, Paul often wrote the most eloquent descriptions of God's glory. However, in this passage, Paul was at a loss for words as he contemplated God's gift of His Son. So, to conclude his thoughts on giving, Paul wrote this heartfelt line.

Thank God for this gift too wonderful for words. (2 Corinthians 9:15)



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Paul found the words that escaped him in 2 Corinthians 9:15 in his prayer in *Ephesians 3:14–21*. Read these verses as we come full circle and remember the many ways God stretched out His hand of grace to us. What strikes you personally as you consider God’s gift of Jesus for you?

Application: What Can We Do to Give with Joy?

Grace and giving truly do go hand in hand. God loved us first by giving His Son, so we love others through our giving (1 John 4:19). Take a moment to look back over the observations and principles from this study. What one truth stands out as a first step forward in your giving with joy?

In the space below, write down an individualized giving plan. Pray for the Spirit to touch your heart and guide your giving. Remember, giving isn’t just about money. Other types of gifts include time together, a cherished possession, words of encouragement, a meal, or any other action that meets a need. Be creative! Make giving fun!

A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for Your Son, who is too wonderful for words. Out of Your heart of love, You gave the most precious of all gifts, and I have received countless blessings beyond description. Stir in my heart a generous spirit so that I can give like You give, with love that is genuine and joy that is boundless. I pray to You the Giver in the name of Your Gift, Jesus, amen.



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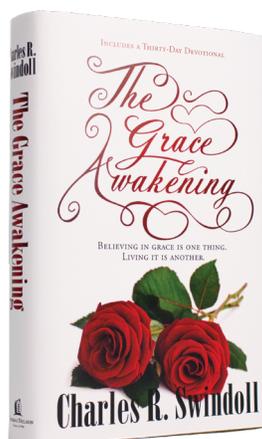
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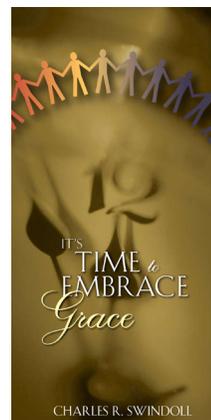
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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