



*January 10, 2010*

*2 Corinthians 8 – 10*

*“The Grace of Giving”*

*Pastor Gary Hamrick*

Pastor Gary opened this teaching with a humorous account<sup>1</sup> of a man who was so enamored with gold that he convinced the Lord to allow him to take one suitcase with him to heaven when it was his time to go. When the man arrived at the Pearly Gates, he presented the suitcase to St. Peter, who told him he wasn't permitted to enter heaven with the suitcase, or anything else, for that matter. St. Peter was given the okay to allow the “carry-on bag” after having checked its contents. He opened the man's suitcase and exclaimed, “You brought pavement?” When you think about it, a story like this really puts some things in perspective. The bottom line is that the stuff we labor so hard for is the pavement of heaven! And yet, how many people lose sleep over money, sacrifice family over money and stress out over money?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.basicjokes.com/djoke.php?id=322> - You Can't Take It With You – There once was a rich man who was near death. He was very grieved because he had worked so hard for his money and wanted to be able to take it with him to heaven. So he began to pray that he might be able to take some of his wealth with him. An angel heard his plea and appeared to him.

"Sorry, but you can't take your wealth with you."

The man begged the angel to speak to God to see if He might bend the rules. The man continued to pray that his wealth could follow him.

The angel reappeared and informed the man that God had decided to allow him to take one suitcase with him. Overjoyed, the man gathered his largest suitcase and filled it with pure gold bars and placed it beside his bed. Soon afterward, he died and showed up at the gates of heaven to greet St. Peter.

St. Peter, seeing the suitcase, said, "Hold on, you can't bring that in here!"

The man explained to St. Peter that he had permission and asked him to verify his story with the Lord.

Sure enough, St. Peter checked it out, came back and said, "You're right. You are allowed one carry-on bag, but I'm supposed to check its contents before letting it through."

St. Peter opened the suitcase to inspect the worldly items that the man found too precious to leave behind and exclaimed, "You brought pavement?"

One example of a man who was consumed with the worries of money is John D. Rockefeller, who, in 1892 at the age of 53, was the world's only billionaire, earning about one million dollars a week.<sup>2</sup> But, he was a sick man who lived on crackers and milk, and he couldn't sleep because of worry. His life and health turned around and he lived to be 97, because he started following the Biblical principle of tithing (giving a tenth of his income to his church – Euclid Avenue Baptist Church, Cleveland, OH<sup>3</sup>) and he took to heart the advice of John Wesley: “Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.”

The Bible has a few things to say about money and giving: there are roughly 2,350 verses in the Bible concerning money, which is about twice as many verses as faith and prayer combined; Jesus spoke more about the stewardship of money than he spoke about heaven and hell combined; the only subject Jesus spoke more about was the Kingdom of God;<sup>4</sup> and 16 of the 38 parables Jesus taught about money and possessions.<sup>5</sup>

Why so much attention in the Bible about this subject? Because God wants us to understand there is a direct correlation between a person's spiritual life and his/her attitudes and actions concerning money and possessions. It's unfortunate that in many ways the Church has not done a very good job of communicating a balanced view of money, prosperity, and material things.

There seem to be two clearly distinct positions in the Church regarding money. The first view being that money is evil, it's dirty, and that it's wrong to make too much or have too much. This view seems to emphasize verses like **1 Timothy 6:10**, which says, “*For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*” The other view is that God is a god of riches and that he blesses us and wants us to be wealthy. One of the Scriptures they use to support this idea is **Proverbs 22:4**, which says, “*Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.*”

Stranded between these two extremes is a great body of people in the church who are living day-to-day on the money they can earn, while trying to provide for their families and improve their lives. It's these people who want to know what lessons and principles the Bible teaches on money and material things.

There are two main points that need to be made before getting into the specifics of the grace of giving. The first is that everything belongs to the Lord and we are owners of nothing but stewards of everything. **Psalm 24:1** says, “*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*” The second major point is since everything belongs to the Lord, we must honor him with what he has given us. **Proverbs 3:9** says, “*Honor the LORD with your wealth.*”

The chief way we honor God with our wealth is not in what we gain, but in how we give. Because someone can be as “poor as dirt” and honor God more than a rich person, because of how much they give. Remember how much Jesus commended the poor widow above all the wealthy as he watched them put their offerings in the Temple boxes? In **Mark 12:43–44**, Jesus said to his disciples: “*I tell you the truth, this poor widow has*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/> – Imagine the vastness of his wealth considering \$1,000,000.00 in 1892 would equal \$24,410,770.98 in 2008!

<sup>3</sup> <http://ech.cwru.edu/ech-cgi/article.pl?id=EABC>

<sup>4</sup> Alcorn, Randy, *Money, Possessions and Eternity*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL, 2003, pages 3-4

<sup>5</sup> Grimm, Eugene, *Generous People*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1992, p. 19

*put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.”*

In every way, God wants us to be like him, to follow him and emulate Jesus. So, if God loves, we should love, too; if God is forgiving, we should forgive; if God is merciful, we should show mercy; if God is giving, we should give.

There are nine points in the following outline concerning the grace of giving.

### Giving Is A Privilege

1. **2 Corinthians 8:4** – *“...they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.”*
2. Paul refers to the extreme poverty of the Macedonian churches that welled up in rich generosity.
3. In 2009 the *Loudoun Times Mirror* and *Leesburg Today* reported that Loudoun County was the richest county in the country, which makes Loudoun County the richest per capita in the world!

### Giving Is A Priority

4. **2 Corinthians 8:5** – *“And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.”*
5. **Proverbs 3:9** – *“Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops...”*

### Giving Is A Sign Of Spiritual Maturity

6. **2 Corinthians 8:7** – *“But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”*
7. Giving is an area we are required to excel in as much as we are faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, and love for others!

### Giving Should Be Done Willingly

8. **2 Corinthians 8:10–12** – *“And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.”*

### Giving Should Be Done Generously

9. **2 Corinthians 9:5–6** – *“So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*
10. **Proverbs 11:25** – *“A generous man will prosper...”*
11. **Proverbs 22:9** – *“A generous man will himself be blessed...”*

### Giving Should Be Done Cheerfully

12. **2 Corinthians 9:7** – *“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*
13. The Greek word *hilaros* from which we get the word hilarious is used in this verse.

### Giving Is An Act Of Grace

14. **2 Corinthians 8:6–7** are verses used by some people who like to point out that tithing is an Old Testament mandate, and they say, “See, we’re under grace today, so giving is an act of grace.”
15. They would be right in that giving is an act of grace not a mandate of the law, however, since grace always does more than the law, how much more should we give whatever the Lord lays on our hearts?
16. In the Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5**, Jesus raised the standard to do more than the minimum.
  - a. Anger with a brother was equated to the act of murder.
  - b. Lust was equated to the act of adultery.
  - c. Loving and praying for your enemies, or those who persecute you, are called for rather than hate.
17. Randy Alcorn, in his book *The Treasure Principle*, writes: “Does it make sense that God would expect from those of us in the wealthiest nation on the face of the earth less than He expected from the poorest Israelite?”

### Giving Is An Act Of Worship

18. **2 Corinthians 9:11–12** – *“You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that*

*you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.”*

19. God does not make us wealthy to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of giving, which results in praise to God!

### Giving Is An Act Of Obedience

20. **2 Corinthians 9:13–14** – *“Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.”*
21. Paul ends on a note that no matter how much you give, you can never give more than what God has given you.

### Final Thoughts And Instructions

22. Since we live in the wealthiest county in the wealthiest country on the face of earth, who else has the potential to be generous for the sake of the Kingdom if not us?
23. Make a pledge to God to reign in spending and pour out giving so you won't squander the privilege of giving.
24. “We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **2 Corinthians 8:1–12; 9:6–15** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Review and discuss #1 – #4 – #6 in the outline above, focusing on what “giving is.”
4. Review and discuss #8 – #9 – #12 in the outline above, focusing on what “giving should be.”
5. Review and discuss #14 – #18 – #20 in the outline above, focusing on the fact that “giving is an act.”
6. Read and discuss **Matthew 23:23**.
  - a. What does it look like for Christians to be as legalistic as the Pharisees when it comes to giving?

7. How has the Lord changed your thinking about giving since you became a Christian?
8. Spend time talking about the extremes Pastor Gary mentioned.
  - a. Money is evil and it's wrong to have too much or make too much.
  - b. God is a god of riches and he wants every Christian to be wealthy.
9. How do you think most people in the middle deal with the subject of giving?
  - a. Do you think they sense that Christians are to give out of the "leftovers"?
10. Do you think giving is really a heart-change issue?
11. Do you think your checkbook is a reflection of your Christianity?
12. Do you have complete trust in the Lord to provide for your needs, or do you have a tendency to hold back because you fear there will be a time when you won't have enough to make ends meet?
13. Review the incredible increase in John Wesley's giving.<sup>6</sup>

	Income	Living Expenses	Giving To The Poor
1 <sup>st</sup> year	30 pounds	28 pounds (93%)	2 pounds (7%)
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	60 pounds	28 pounds (47%)	32 pounds (53%)
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	90 pounds	28 pounds (31%)	62 pounds (69%)
4 <sup>th</sup> year	120 pounds	28 pounds (23%)	92 pounds (77%)
Later	over 1,400 pounds	30 pounds (2%)	over 1,400 pounds (98%)

14. Close your time by allowing everyone in your group to: examine their heart and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to them about their giving; think about the nine points Pastor Gary made about giving and determine where changes need to be made; determine to honor God in their giving and recognize that it's not about what we gain, but how much we give; make a pledge to reign in spending; to determine how the Lord wants them to pour out so they won't miss out on the blessing and privilege of giving.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Accountability Connection* by Matt Friedeman, Victor Books.