

Seven Keys to SUCCESS

Lesson 7—Share Your Resources

Series: “Seven Keys to Success: Habits for Christian Living”

Surrender it all to God
Unite with God Every Day
Confess Your Sins
Continually Study God’s Word
Encourage Others to Know Christ
Stay the Course
Share Your Resources

OVERVIEW

Background Bible Passage: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Key Verse: 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.”

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- Consider the level of your own personal generosity.
- Consider whether or not you would be considered a “cheerful” giver.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed Sunday School.
- Use postcards to reach out to your class and let them know that you’re praying for them.
- Pray for each student by name.

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

CONTACT 1--The first time a student is absent, give him a call.

CONTACT 2--Following the second absence, send him a postcard.

CONTACT 3-- The third week they are absent, pay him a visit.

THINK ABOUT IT: What does it say to a student when they miss multiple weeks in a row and are never contacted? It says, “It really doesn’t matter if you’re here or not.” Small things communicate great messages. Let the three “small” things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

OPENING ACTIVITY

After students enter the room, take out a one dollar bill. Toss it into the middle of the floor but don't say anything about it. The chances are that a student will immediately reach out and grab it or say, "Can I have that?" The first person that grabs it or asks for it, gets it with the following statement: "*Since you were the first person to ask for (or grab) that dollar, you can keep it and do with it whatever you like but you have to answer one question: What do you think you'll do with it?*"

(NOTE: This dollar bill will be used to illustrate several principles in today's lesson.)

Discussion

SAY: Today we're going to talk about money and generosity but first I have a few questions for you:

- *On a scale of 1 to 10 how important is money to you?*
 - *Do you get an allowance? If so, how much?*
- *How much money do you think the average teenage boy and teenage girl spend each week? Who do you think spends more?*

According to a 1993 survey (Yes, this stat is over a decade old. Just imagine how much it might have changed.):

Teenage boys spend an average of \$69 dollars per week.

Teenage girls spend an average of \$62 per week. ¹

NOTE: In both instances this was the money they spent, not the money someone else spent on them.

- *What do you think a majority of teenagers use their money for? (Themselves.)*
 - *Has anyone recently given you a gift?*
 - *What was the last gift you gave?*
- *If you could afford to give anything you wanted as a gift, what would you give and to whom would you give it? How would it make you feel to give such a gift?*

SAY: A moment ago I tossed out a dollar bill. It was a free gift, but since that time, it hasn't passed onto anyone else—you haven't given it away and that's not a bad thing but it makes a good point. It's against our natural nature to give—by nature we are a people who like to keep things to ourselves. That's the reason today's lesson is so important. It's about a godly discipline that is contrary to the world's way of doing things.

SAY: Let's take a look at part of what the Bible says about money and sharing your resources with others.

BIBLE LESSON

Turn to 2 Corinthians 8.

While they are turning, SAY: One out of every ten verses in the Gospels deal with money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables of Jesus have to do with money and possessions. Obviously the role that these play in a person's life is very important and the Bible has a lot to say about it. But before we read these verses, let me ask you a couple of questions:

- *What is the difference between a tithe and an offering?* (A tithe of 10% is something God required of his people. He didn't ask it or suggest it; He required it. An offering, though, is optional and is a gift that is freely given. Tithing is an act of obedience; an offering is an act of love and gratitude that goes above and beyond what God requires.)
- *Why do you think God requires a tithe?* (God's requirement of a tithe has very little to do with the money. This requirement has everything to do with obedience. God doesn't *need* your money; He wants your heart and where your heart is, there is your treasure also. Since money has always been and always will be a struggling point with people, a requirement to give "back" to God is a continual reminder of what really matters and an easy way to check your heart to see if money or possessions have become more important to you than they should.)

Background

Here's the background of the verses we're about to read: The apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian church and encouraging them to give an offering to the needy Christians in Jerusalem. He holds the Macedonian churches up as an example for them. Listen to what he says about how they gave.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

- *How did the Macedonian churches give?* (Hint: There are nine descriptions of how they gave.)
 - Out of severe trials (v.2)
 - Out of overflowing joy (v. 2)
 - Out of extreme poverty (v. 2)
 - They gave as much as they were able (v. 3)
 - They gave beyond their ability (v. 3)
 - They gave entirely on their own (v. 3)
 - They pleaded for the privilege of sharing (v. 4)
 - They gave themselves first to God (v. 5)
 - Then they gave themselves to others (v. 5)
- *How many of these nine characteristics do you find in your life?*
 - Do you give even when you are facing severe trials?
 - Do you give out of overflowing joy?
 - If you are experiencing extreme poverty, do you still give?
 - Do you give as much as you are able?

- Do you give beyond your ability?
 - Do you give entirely on your own?
 - Do you plead for the privilege of sharing?
 - Have you given yourself first to God?
 - Then have you given yourself to others?
- *When Paul commends these churches for giving beyond your ability is he saying that you should give until it hurts?* (No. Paul’s purpose here is *not* to teach that God wants you to give to the extent that your life will be hurt or hindered. His point is to lift up the Macedonian churches as an example of giving with such great joy that they had trouble restraining the extent to which they gave. God gives you good gifts for you to enjoy and He wants you to take pleasure in them—not to give everything away and be poor and needy. Enjoy the good gifts God gives you but never let them become too important to you. A believer who is surrendered to God should always be willing to lay down everything if that’s what it takes to follow and obey Christ.)

Choose a volunteer to read—Read 2 Corinthians 8:12

- *What does this verse mean?*

Consider the following story:

Story: A Big Gift

A few years ago, on a cold February day, a limousine traveling down the New Jersey expressway got a flat tire. The limo driver got out to change the tire only to discover that the spare was flat. Before he could summons road service, a man in a pickup truck stopped and offered to help. Among the equipment on his truck was an air tank. As the man and the driver finished up, the car window slid down and the man was shocked to see Donald Trump sitting inside. “This was very nice of you to stop and help,” Trump said. “What can I do to thank you?” The man thought for a moment and then said, “Tomorrow is Valentine’s Day. My wife would really get a kick out of receiving a dozen roses from you.” Trump agreed and drove off. The next day, a messenger arrived with a box. Inside were two dozen roses and a note: “Happy Valentine’s Day from a friend of your husband. (signed) Donald Trump P.S. Thanks for helping us out. By the way, I paid off your mortgage.”²

SAY: It would be great to be able to bless others in a big way like that, but some people don’t give because they feel that what they have to give just doesn’t amount to much.

- *How do you think God feels about this?*

SAY: Successful giving has nothing to do with amounts or with who gave more than whom. It has everything to do with your heart, your willingness and your faithfulness to God, regardless of whether the amount is big or small.

(If you have time, you might want to refer to the story of the widow's mite in Mark 12:41-44)

KEY VERSE

Choose a volunteer to read—2 Corinthians 9:7

- *How does this say God wants you to give? (Cheerfully: This word actually means “Hilariously,” not reluctantly or under compulsion.)*
- *Would you consider yourself a cheerful giver? Why or why not?*

Story—The Wrong Bill

A father-in-law was sitting by his son-in-law during a worship service. Offering time came and son-in-law pulled out his wallet. The father-in-law knew that they didn't have a lot of money and couldn't help glancing to see what was in his wallet. Inside was a one dollar bill and a hundred dollar bill. The son-in-law grabbed the hundred dollar bill and quickly folded it over in his hand.

“Son, I think you grabbed the wrong one,” the father-in-law said kindly. “No sir,” the son-in-law responded quietly, “how can I not give God my best for the great things He has given me.”³

- *What are some things God has given you?*

SAY: He gave you His Son, a new life, free forgiveness. He has provided you with a whole mind and body and a home in a free country. He has given you the ability to have a place to live, food to eat, a job for your parents that provides income for your family. Even the money you have came to you by Him—Everything you have is a gift from him. *Why, therefore, would you withhold giving back not only a ten percent tithe that God requires but also an offering of generosity out of a cheerful heart for the good way God has treated you?*

- *How generous are you with the Lord?*
- *How generous are you with others?*

Consider the following situations honestly and realistically and decide what your response would be:

- You know the Bible says that you should give God a tithe (ten percent of the money you gain). But you're only making minimum wage at a fast food place and really need the money.
- You're driving to the mall and you see a beggar on the side of the street with a sign that says, “Stranded. Anything to help—PLEASE!” But all you have is a \$20 bill. (NOTE: Always be wise in how to help someone. Giving money to a beggar on the street is usually not the wisest course of action. If someone needs food, then buy them some food because if you give them cash you never know what they might do with it—i.e., go out and spend it on alcohol, etc. Also, be careful never to put yourself in a situation that

might be dangerous or where someone might take advantage of your generosity.)

- Your grandpa likes to hand over extra money to you—after all, you’re his favorite grandkid (or so you think). Sometimes he gives you \$50. Do you take it? (*NOTE: Some people don’t like getting gifts like this but sometimes when you don’t let them do it, you rob them of the blessing of trying to bless you. What makes a difference here are questions such as: If he gives this to you, will he go without something? Can he afford this? Is he trying to buy your love or attention or is he doing it just to bless you? Etc.*)

- *What do you think your generosity with God and others might say about your relationship with the Lord?*

Story—The Offering Prayer

One day a ministry prayed before the offering. He said, “Lord, no matter what we say or do, here is what we think of you. Amen.”⁴

- *What do you think about the pastor’s prayer?*
- A wise man once said, “What you do is what you believe, everything else is just a bunch of religious talk. *If this is true, what do your actions show about what you believe concerning your money and possessions?*”

WRAP IT UP

Ask the person who has the dollar bill to pull it out—Let’s say you gain \$1. How much of that is the tithe that God commands? (A dime.)

How you use the rest of it (in godly ways, of course) is up to you—you can spend it, save it, hide it, or you can give it. An offering is anything above the tithe and God delights in His children being generous and kind with our money and possessions towards both Him and others.

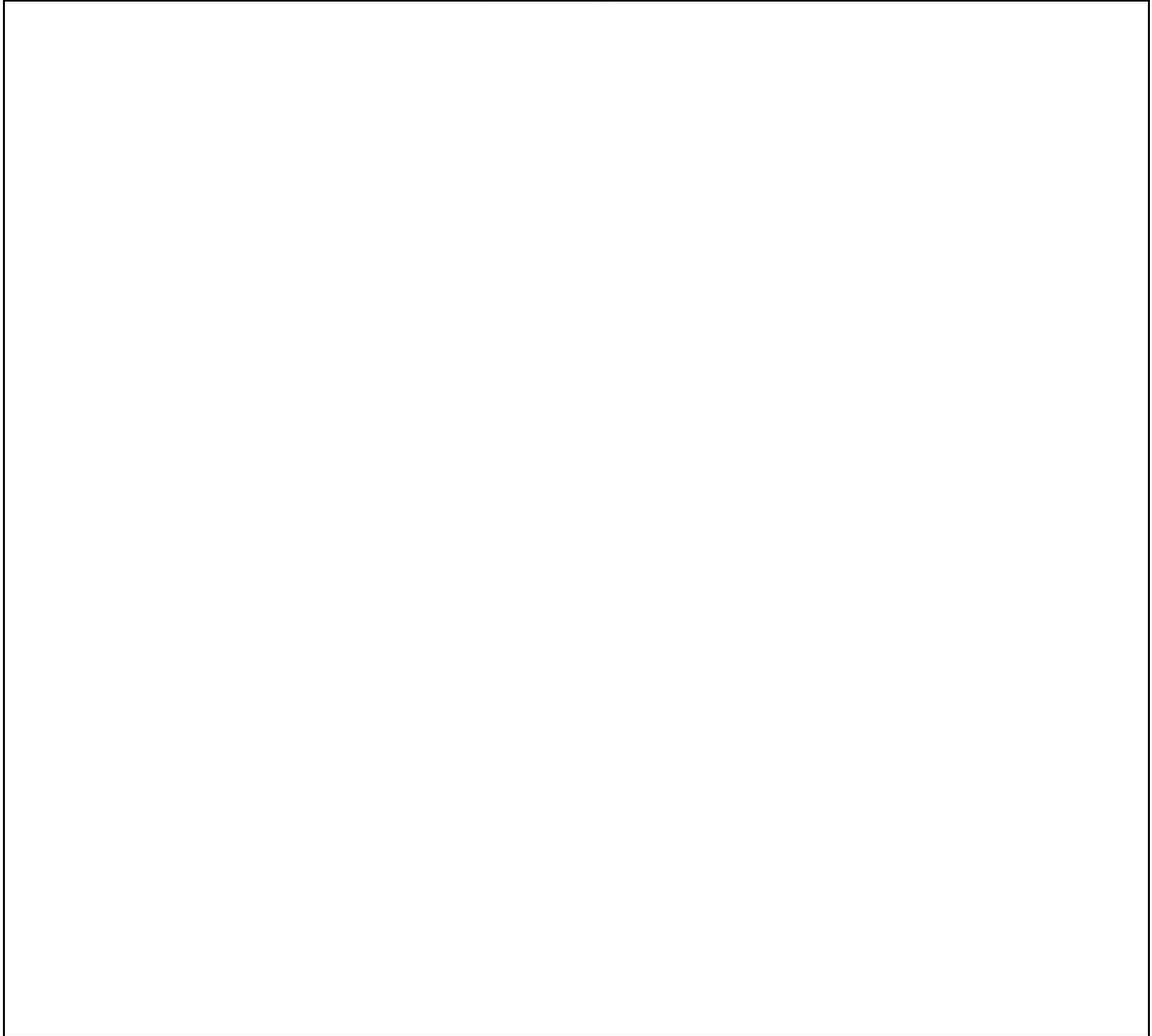
SAY: God wants you to be both obedient to give your tithe and generous in your giving to both Him and others—to give cheerfully and out of joy and gratitude..

Prayer Time

Pray specifically today that your students will have giving and cheerful hearts when it comes to sharing with others.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests



¹*One Thousand Illustrations: Stories for Life*, (Texas: Student Discipleship Ministries, 2000) CD-Rom.

²*A Children's Leader Devotion*, (Lake Forest, CA: Saddleback Church), Week 30.

³Unknown.

⁴*One Thousand Illustrations: Stories for Life*, (Texas: Student Discipleship Ministries, 2000) CD-Rom.