

Showing God's Love

By Being a Cheerful Giver

(2 Corinthians 9:7)

Objective: The students will learn that by giving, they will show God's love to others.

Materials: Bible; four clear plastic cups; four rubber bands; plastic wrap; water; coins; small construction paper hearts of red and pink; small 1-inch toys such as a ball, tiny teddy bear, marbles, little doll; small pieces of food such as a few grapes, peas, green beans, miniature marshmallows; small treats such as pieces of fruit candy; napkins.

Before Class: Separate coins, hearts, toys, and pieces of food into piles. As children arrive, have them sit around a table.

Pre-Session Warm Up

Have you ever received a gift that you really like? [Teacher, let the children respond.]

How did it make you feel to get that gift?

How do you think that person felt when he gave you the gift? Why? (Really good because I got so excited about my gift; happy because my grandma loves to give me things; great because I said that the ten dollars was the best gift I got for my birthday.)

Have you ever given someone a special gift? How did that make you feel?

Today we're going to learn that God loves a cheerful giver.

Opening Prayer

Lord, You are pleased when we give to others with a cheerful heart. I pray that you would help us all to learn how to be generous givers. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Lesson Review

We've been learning about how to show God's love to others.

1. In our first lesson we learned that God's love is everywhere and that he wants us to love Him back with all of our heart, mind, and soul.
2. Next, we learned that God knows all about us. He always knows where we are and what we're doing and what we're thinking and feeling. And, even so, He still loves us completely. In the same way, He wants us to love others, even people who do wrong to us and don't deserve our love. Because that's the way He loves us.
3. Third, we learned that because planet earth belongs to God, we can show others that we love Him by taking care of our environment properly. We did an activity that showed the effects of an oil spill on the ocean, birds, plants and animals. We talked about ways to care for God's possessions.
4. Next, we learned that one way of showing God's love is by being a good neighbor—that is, by thinking of others first and sharing what we have with them. We did an activity to show how sharing brings people together and often brings beautiful things into our lives—we put individual drops of food coloring in a dish of milk. Then when we added drops of dish soap it caused the food coloring drops to swirl together to make a beautiful rainbow.
5. Then we learned that we can show God's love by being compassionate to those who are hurting. God wants us to help those who are sad, lonely, scared, shy, or feeling rejected. We put Band-Aids on a broken heart and talked about ways we can help people with hurts on the inside.
6. Next, we learned that we can show God's love by forgiving others when they do wrong things to us. We counted out 490 bird seed to

show just how many times 7 times 70 is – that's the number of times God tells us to forgive others!

7. In last week's lesson we learned that we can show God's love by using kind words. We put a paper clip on a ramp, but it just sat there like unkind words sit on a hearer's heart. But when we poured oil over the clip, it moved down the ramp, just like how kind words can help move sad things out of a person's life.

Lesson

The Bible tells us that giving to others pleases God.

2 Corinthians 9:7

You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. "For God loves a person who gives cheerfully."

The Bible gives us a wonderful example of a little boy who gives cheerfully. One day after Jesus had been teaching and ministering to the people for a long time, the disciples tried to encourage Jesus to send the crowd away to buy food. They knew how tired and hungry everyone must be.

Mark 6:35-36

Late in the afternoon his disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. (36) Send the crowds away so they can go to the nearby farms and villages and buy something to eat."

In those days, there were no convenience stores on the corner or huge grocery stores that sold food. The people had walked a long way. It was a long way back. How could they get something to eat? How could their children get something to eat?

Mark 6:37

But Jesus said, "You feed them." "With what?" they asked. "We'd have to work for months to earn enough money to buy food for all these people!"

How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus told them to feed all those people? [Teacher, let the children respond.] Have you ever seen people in great need? Have you seen homeless people on the side of the road with signs that say, "Will work for food?" Perhaps you've felt bad when you've seen the needs of others and wondered what you could do.

When Jesus asked the disciples to provide food for over 5,000 people, they asked in amazement if they should go and spend eight month's wages on bread. They probably thought it was hopeless.

Jesus wanted to use the disciples in this impossible situation to meet the needs of others. And, Jesus can use you to meet the needs of others, too. But, what would they do? Jesus asked them to search for food among the crowd.

Mark 6:38

"How much bread do you have?" he asked. "Go and find out." They came back and reported, "We have five loaves of bread and two fish."

They returned to Jesus with a little boy who had five loaves and two fish. Maybe this little boy wondered how the Lord Jesus could use so little to feed so many. But he was willing to give the little bit he had. And, he did it with a cheerful heart.

Mark 6:39-40

Then Jesus told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups on the green grass. (40) So they sat down in groups of fifty or a hundred.

Then Jesus thanked God the Father for the food.

Mark 6:41

Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people. He also divided the fish for everyone to share.

Why is it important to let Jesus use you to meet the needs of others? When you are sharing with someone else, no matter who it is, it's like sharing it with Jesus! You get the biggest blessing! It's not how much you have to give, but how willing you are to give it. As you share the little bit you have with others, Jesus will use you in a mighty way! The little boy must have watched in amazement as Jesus commanded the disciples to pass out his little bit of lunch to that huge crowd.

Mark 6:42

They all ate as much as they wanted.

The disciples did everything they could by gathering the available food and organizing the people into groups. Then, in answer to prayer, God did the impossible. When you face an impossible task, do what you can and ask God to do the rest. He may see fit to make the impossible happen!

Mark 6:43

And afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftover bread and fish.

The disciples gathered twelve baskets full of leftovers (one for each disciple!)

Mark 6:44

A total of 5,000 men and their families were fed from those loaves!

There were probably 15,000 or 20,000 people in all counting the women and children.

One little boy offered his lunch to Jesus to feed as many people as he could. Jesus appreciated that little boy's gift. He took the few loaves of bread and fish the little boy had given and turned them into baskets and baskets full of bread and fish. Everyone had enough to eat, including all the adults and the children, too. When the food was collected, there were twelve baskets left over! Think how much more that was than the little lunch the boy had given in the first place. Jesus had performed a miracle with the boy's gift.

[Review today's Memory Verse.] What does this verse say about the attitude we should have when we give to others? (We should be cheerful. We should *want* to give, not feel like we *have* to give.)

Have you ever given something to someone when you really didn't want to? How did that feel? (I felt bad inside and pouted afterwards. It's no fun to give.)

Of course, that's not the kind of giving that God wants. He wants us to show His love by being a cheerful giver.

When we give with a cheerful attitude, it is fun. It's as if the things we give become bigger because God uses them in special ways to bless other people and to make us feel good, too. Plus, God is pleased when we cheerfully give what we have to help others out of pure kindness.

Magnified Gifts

Let's do an experiment to show how what we have becomes "bigger" when we give it away rather than when we keep it all to ourselves. You have all seen a magnifying glass. Just like this magnifying glass seems to make an object look bigger than it actually is, when you give a gift with a cheerful heart, it becomes bigger because you are not only blessing others, you are pleasing God, as well.

[Hold the magnifying glass over an item and allow children to look through the glass.]

Let's demonstrate this idea.

Today we're going to make a magnifying glass out of a jar and cellophane. [Divide the class into four groups. Give each group one jar, one set of items, and one rubber band. Have groups arrange their items in the jar, then help them put plastic wrap loosely over the top. Secure the wrap by placing the rubber band around the top of the jar. Have groups make a dip in their plastic wrap to hold water. Then carefully pour water into the plastic wrap dip. The curved water in the wrap will act like a lens. When students look at the items through the side of the jar, the items will appear normal size. When they look through the water "lens" by peering down through the water into the jar, the items will look larger.]

Our jars represent giving. Each group has items in their jar that represent different things we can give to others. With your group, take a minute to decide what kind of giving your items represent and ways a person could cheerfully give these things away.

[Let each group make up a scenario of what their items could represent and how to give those items away. The **coins** could represent giving money to needy people through your church or other organizations or to friends in need. The paper **hearts** could represent giving love to others through things like listening, playing with them, helping them. The **toys** could represent giving good used toys or new ones to children who don't have many toys, perhaps at Christmas time or at other times of the year. The pieces of **food** represent giving people food, such as at a homeless shelter, in a gift basket, or cookies to friends to show them you care.]

When we looked at our gifts through the sides of the jar, they are regular size. But when we looked at the gifts through the magnifying lens we made, they seemed bigger.

How does what we have, seem to get "bigger" when we give it to others? (It becomes bigger because you are not only blessing someone else, you are pleasing God, as well.) The giver's heart makes the gift more valuable to God.

God does not ask us to give away everything we have. He wants us to give away part of what we have. In fact, our verse says that God wants us to have a plan to give to others. That helps us learn to love others.

What do you have that you can give to others? (I get an allowance so I could give part of it to my church. I have baby toys that I never play with so I could give them to my church nursery. My neighbor doesn't have a Big Wheels but I have two, so I could give him one.)

Of course, before you give something away, you should always get an OK from your parents. They are in charge of you and your belongings, so it is important to tell them what you are doing. But I'm sure they will be excited to see that you are a giving person.

Right now, let's ask God to help us show His love by being cheerful givers.

Closing Prayer

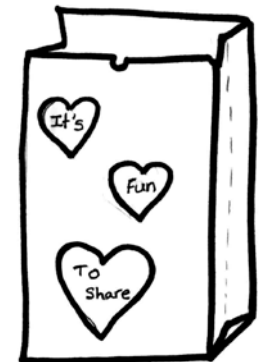
Father, thank You for giving me so many wonderful things. I want to be a generous giver like You. Please help me be a cheerful giver. Show me what I can give to others and to my church. Thank You for loving me so much. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

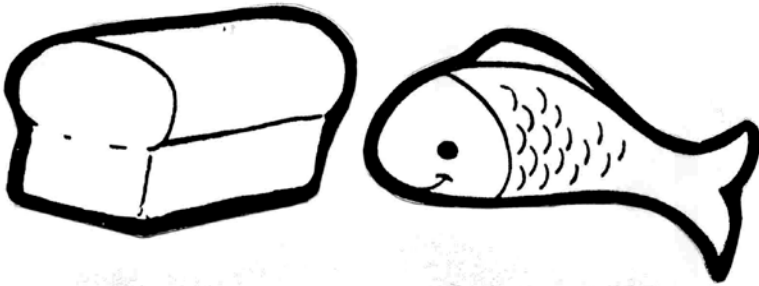
It's Fun To Share Lunch Sacks

Have each child decorate a lunch bag with hearts, ribbons, and so forth. Write on the hearts "It's fun to share." In each sack put 2 cheese fish crackers and 5 soda crackers. Let each child give their sack to someone special.



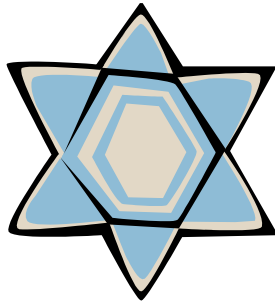
Take Home Paper

Using the patterns below, draw five loaves and two fishes on take-home papers. Encourage children to record in one loaf or fish each day a way Jesus used them to meet a need.

**Star Search**

One of the simplest gifts we can give others is a compliment. Giving compliments to others helps us get along with them better and it makes the other person feel better about himself.

Cut out star patterns and write ways to compliment others. Have them plan to give these stars to their family members.

**Game Center**

Use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

Review Questions:

1. Why did the disciples tell Jesus to send the crowds away? (Jesus had been teaching a long time and everyone was tired and hungry.)

2. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do about the hungry crowd? (He told them, "You give them something to eat.")
3. How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus told them to feed all those people? (Overwhelmed with the impossible task.)
4. How much money would it have taken to feed all those people? (About 8 month's wages.)
5. How did Jesus tell His disciples to meet the needs of the people? (Go and see how much food was among the people.)
6. Who was the only one who offered to share his food? (A little boy had 5 loaves and 2 fish!)
7. What did Jesus do before He broke the loaves? (He thanked God the Father for the food.)
8. Why is it important to let Jesus use you to meet the needs of others? (You get to be used by the Lord to bless others!)
9. Did people get enough to eat, or only enough to tide them over until they could get home? (They were all filled!)
10. How much leftovers were there? (12 baskets full.)
11. Why didn't Jesus simply make food appear by His power? (He wanted the disciples and the little boy to be part of the miracle; to share in the joy of meeting the needs of so many.)
12. What are some ways you can be used by God to be a blessing to others?

