



BEING WISE ABOUT CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

This chapter may seem unrelated to our needs today ... but actually it deals in a very helpful way with three areas of stewardship: **money** (1 Cor. 16:1-4), **opportunities** (1 Cor. 16:5-9), and **people** (1 Cor 16:10-24). These are probably the greatest resources the church has today, and they must not be wasted.

Managing Money (16:1-4) ... Even though this was a special missionary offering, from Paul's instructions we may learn some basic principles that relate to Christian stewardship.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (KJV)

¹ Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ² ***Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him,*** that there be no gatherings when I come.”

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² ***On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper,*** so that there will be no collecting when I come.”

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (NIV)

¹ Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² ***On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income,*** saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”

Giving is an act of worship. Each member was to come to the Lord's Day gathering prepared to give his share for that week. The early church met on the first day of the week in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is tragic when church members “*give only as a duty*” and forget that our offerings are to be “*spiritual sacrifices*” presented to the Lord (Phil. 4:18). Giving should be an act of worship to the resurrected and ascended Savior.

Giving should be systematic. Each believer was to set aside his offering at home and then bring it to the assembly on the first day. Paul did not want to have to take up a number of collections when he arrived in Corinth. He wanted the whole contribution to be ready.

Giving was personal and individual. Paul expected each member to share in the offering, the rich and poor alike. Anyone who had an income was privileged to share and to help those in need. He wanted all to share in the blessing.

Giving is to be proportionate. “As God hath prospered him” (1 Cor. 16:2) suggests that believers who have more should give more. The Jewish believers in the church would have been accustomed to the tithe, but Paul did not mention any special proportion. **Certainly the tithe (10 percent of one's income) is a good place to begin our stewardship, but we must not remain at that level.** As the Lord gives us more, we should plan to give more.

Paul made it clear in 2 Corinthians 8-9 that Christian **giving is a grace**, the outflow of the grace of God in our lives and not the result of promotion or pressure. **An open heart cannot maintain a closed hand.** If we appreciate the grace of God extended to us ... we will want to express that grace by sharing what God has given us.

Opportunities (16:5-9) ... “Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5:15-16, NIV). Paul was as careful in his use of time, as he was in his use of money.

Paul informed his friends at Corinth of his plans for future travel and ministry. It is worth noting that his statements were very tentative: “*It may be suitable .. it may be .. wherever I go .. but I trust.*” Of course, the entire plan was dependent on God's providential leading “*if the Lord permit*” Paul's attitude toward his future plans agreed with the injunctions in James 4:13-17.

Paul had an open door of ministry in Ephesus, and this was important to him. **He wanted to win the lost in Ephesus, not go to Corinth to pamper the saved.** Paul was neither an optimist nor a pessimist, he was a realist. He saw both the opportunities and the obstacles. God had opened “a great door for effective work” and Paul wanted to seize the opportunities while they were still there.

The stewardship of opportunity is important. The individual believer, and the church family, must constantly ask ... What opportunities, is God giving us today? Instead of complaining about the obstacles ... we must take advantage of the opportunities and leave the results with the Lord!

People (16:10-24) ... Money and opportunities are valueless without people. The church's greatest asset is people, and yet too often the church takes people for granted. Jesus did not give His disciples money, but He did invest three years training them for service so they might seize the opportunities He would present them. If people are prepared, then God will supply both the opportunities and the money so that His work will be accomplished.

SHARED MINISTRY

This letter was designed to pave the way for Paul's next visit to Corinth. But Paul didn't present himself as God's sole faithful messenger. These verses mention five others -- Timothy, Apollos, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus -- who, in one way or another, served the Corinthians and Paul. Paul was eager to receive help from others who were genuine servants of God.

We serve a God of unlimited means, yet we must be humble in claiming the effectiveness of our service. We should encourage others, work alongside them, and ask for and accept their help. To do so illustrates teamwork in the marvelous spiritual organism called the church of Jesus Christ.

Paul's final words to the church in Corinth sum up what he has written in this letter.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (ESV)

“¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all that you do be done in love.”

- They were to **be on guard**. They were to be constantly watchful or alert for spiritual enemies that might slip in and threaten to destroy them, whether it be divisions (1:10-17; 11:18), pride (3:18-21), sin (5:1-8), disorder (14:40), or erroneous theology (15:12). (See also 1 Thess 5:6,10; 1 Peter 5:8.)
- They needed to **stand true** to what they believed -- that is, the gospel that they had been taught in the beginning, the gospel that they had accepted, the gospel that had brought them salvation (15:1-2).
- They had to **be courageous** so that they could stand against false teachers, deal with sin in the congregation, and straighten out the problems that Paul had addressed in this letter.
- They should **be strong** with the strength given by the Holy Spirit.
- They should do **everything . . . with love** (13), because without love, they would be no more than prideful noisemakers.

Paul encouraged the **“holy kiss”** as a way for Christians to greet each other, and a way to help break down the divisions in this church. This custom was carried over from Jewish society, where a kiss was a normal greeting. In our day, a handshake or hug conveys the same warmth, genuineness, and respect. To a church mired in a pattern of divisiveness and personal competitiveness, Paul issues a simple order: Show the world you appreciate each other. ***Make sure your greetings are heartfelt and enthusiastic!***