

Giving, Sending, and the Will of God  
1 Corinthians 16:1-12  
August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021

1. Giving should be \_\_\_\_\_, proportional, and \_\_\_\_\_ handled. (16:1-4)
  
2. Missionaries should be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ by local churches. (16:5-12)
  
3. Four observations about \_\_\_\_\_ making and the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
  - a. Consider your \_\_\_\_\_. (v. 12)
  
  - b. Don't assume \_\_\_\_\_ desires equal \_\_\_\_\_ desires. (v. 7)
  
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't mean it isn't God's will. (v. 9)
  
  - d. Trusting in God doesn't prohibit \_\_\_\_\_.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on 1 Corinthians 16:1-12

1. Why is giving such a sensitive thing to talk about in churches? How might people's past experiences affect the way they approach the topic of giving in church?
  
2. 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 contain an extended section on giving.
  - a. How does 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 describe the attitude and motives we should strive for in giving?
  
  - b. How does 2 Corinthians 8:9 shape our perspective on giving?
  
  - c. In what way does 2 Corinthians 8:12 encourage someone who wants to give but has limited financial means?
  
  - d. How does 2 Corinthians 9:7 describe the heart attitude that should accompany giving? What should we do if we don't feel like a "cheerful giver?"
  
3. Why is proper accountability so important when it comes to handling financial gifts? (16:3; see also 2 Corinthians 8:20-21)
  
4. How does the relationship between Paul, Timothy, Apollos, and the church in Corinth provide a positive model for modern missionaries and local churches? (16:5-12)
  
5. What steps can you take to get to know missionaries supported by UBC?
  
6. Of the four brief observations about decision making and the will of God in the message, were any surprising to you or were there any you disagreed with? If so, why?
  
7. Why is it important to hold our plans with an open hand as modeled in the phrase, "if the Lord permits"? (16:7; see also James 4:13-15). How does this perspective on the future help us cultivate humility?

## Giving, Sending, and the Will of God

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Big idea: Giving and serving are accomplished together in the body of Christ.

### Intro

This chapter has a collection of closing thoughts so it has a feel of different thoughts rather than one, overarching idea. We'll cover these over a couple weeks.

Today we'll look at some closing thoughts on giving and sending and then make some observations about decision making and God's will.

The first two (giving and sending) form an unavoidable reminder of the interdependence among believers.

13 people or places are mentioned by name in these 24 verses.

Collections are raised from some believers to help other believers they have never met. What obligation do they have from a human perspective? Different cultural background. They have never met. All they have in common is Jesus. It turns out that is enough.

Paul is also relying on these believers to help send him to another spot for ministry.

He encourages them to welcome Timothy and Apollos and send them as well.

He mentions other churches and passes on greetings.

The Bible knows nothing of an individualistic, independent Christianity. Individuals are cooperating and churches are cooperating.

1. Giving should be ***planned***, proportional, and ***carefully*** handled. (16:1-4)
  - a. This was specific giving for a unique situation.
    - i. Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were impoverished through a number of factors.
      1. There was a famine that went through the area in the late 40's.
      2. Higher relative poverty rate in Jerusalem in general.
      3. Attraction to the gospel of the poor and marginalized.
      4. Social ostracism of those who convert to Christ from Judaism and were cut off from some sources of aid.
    - ii. Paul was gathering money to support them from believers, many of whom were Gentiles. It was a beautiful example of Christians supporting one another when there would have been animosity between the two groups prior to Christ.
    - iii. **Romans 15:25-27** but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. <sup>26</sup> For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.
    - iv. In 1 Cor. 16:1 he says this is a directive already given to the churches in Galatia (modern day Turkey). Romans 15 says the churches in Macedonia (northern Greece) and Achaia (southern Greece, the location of Corinth) contributed.
  - b. There are broader principles that we can apply to giving.
    - i. Their giving was planned (v. 2a)

1. They set aside some money on the first day of every week so that the collection would be ready when Paul came to town. Another indication that the early church was meeting on Sunday, the first day of the week, rather than the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday.
  2. Giving can sometimes be spontaneous – we hear about a need, we have money available so we decide on the spur of the moment to give. However, most giving takes intentional planning if it is to happen.
  3. He would have to follow up with them in 2 Corinthians 8 to follow through on their good intentions.
    - a. **2 Corinthians 8:10-12** I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*. <sup>11</sup> But now finish doing it also, so that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability.
  4. You might plan your giving through recurring online donation. You might build it into your budget. You might make it the first check you write.
    - a. Sometimes people fear that it might just become routine, unthinking, and disconnected from giving as an act of worship.
    - b. That is very possible, especially if you set up online giving, and yet believers have probably wrestled with those concerns at every stage of monetary development.
      - i. “Giving coins doesn’t feel the same as bringing a newly slaughtered chicken.”
      - ii. “This paper money doesn’t feel as weighty as coins.”
      - iii. “Writing a check doesn’t seem as personal as bringing cash.”
      - iv. “Giving online feels disconnected.”
- ii. Their giving was proportional (v. 2b)
1. It was given “as he may prosper” – for some that is more, for others it is less.
  2. “Each one of you” was to give, but that giving would look different for each one.
  3. As the Lord prospers, do we consider how we can give?
    - a. I don’t necessarily see this as a repetition of the OT tithe. Rather, it’s a recognition that as the Lord blesses we should look to be conduits not just reservoirs.
    - b. Randy Alcorn shares the analogy of a FedEx employee who takes all the packages home at the end of the day. “If you didn’t want me to keep it you shouldn’t have given it to me anyway.” Randy responds, “YOU’RE THE FEDEX GUY! THAT’S YOUR JOB!”
- iii. Their giving was carefully handled (vv. 3-4)
1. Whoever they approve will be sent with letters to carry their gift to Jerusalem. Why? Personal contact but also accountability and transparency.
  2. Our system at UBC –

- a. Giving is done online, by mail, or by the offering box at the back of the worship center
  - b. It's secured and collected and then counted by two money counters
    - i. They are chosen from the membership and confirmed by vote each year at the congregational meeting
  - c. The gifts are taken to the bank for deposit in a sealed bag
  - d. Our treasurer tracks deposits and expenses and provides a transparent report each month that is presented to the board but is also available on the bulletin board in the resource center.
    - i. The treasurer is also chosen from the membership and approved by the membership at the congregational meeting.
    - ii. Because he keeps track of the giving to issue year end reports for tax purposes, he is the only one who knows what people give.
  - e. I don't know what people give and the other board members don't know because we don't want to feel swayed by what people do or don't give.
  - f. We report giving each week in the bulletin as another step of transparency.
3. **2 Corinthians 8:20-21** taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; <sup>21</sup> for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.
- c. We don't want to pretend there is a straight and obvious line from a passage about intentional giving to the poor in a specific first century context and the need to give to a local church to support ministry. But there are some principles that carry over. Additionally, other principles support local church giving.
    - i. By Acts 4-6 giving was brought to the leaders of the local church in Jerusalem and distributed by the deacons.
    - ii. Giving sustained the ministry of the local church (1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17-18)
    - iii. It's true that the church is a people not a building, but we're also a people that gather in a place. This place houses our weekly gathering, provides a hub for outreach, is a visible witness in our community.
      - 1. Giving enables the facility to be maintained as a launch pad for ministry, but clearly not the only point of ministry in the community.
    - iv. Local churches are to send missionaries on their way and giving supports this (i.e. Paul to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 16:6ff; 3 John 1:5-8)
      - 1. **3 John 1:5-8** Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially *when they are* strangers; <sup>6</sup> and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. <sup>7</sup> For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup> Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.
  - d. And yet even with those practical considerations, it's important to remember the heart behind giving is described as an act of worship that reflects and directs our hearts.
    - i. **Matthew 6:19-21** "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. <sup>20</sup> "But store up for yourselves treasures in

heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; <sup>21</sup> for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- ii. Studies consistently show that the older generations have been more faithful in giving than younger generations.
  1. 80% of the money given to the American church is given by those age 55 and older.
  2. 96% of Christians give away less than 10% of their income. Average: 2.6%
  3. Those in 20's are substantially less likely to give to a church
    - a. older you are, the greater your tendency to give generously. The younger he is, the less he gives proportionately
- iii. There are obvious practical concerns with these trends, but much more so it's concerning that younger generations will miss out on the benefits that come from living with an open hand, giving as a pattern of life, refusing to be consumers and choosing to break the hold of materialism.

2. Missionaries should be ***supported*** and ***sent*** by local churches. (16:5-12)

- a. Paul plans a route to visit them and then be sent on. (vv. 5-9)
  - i. Ephesus is across the Aegean Sea on the coast of Asia minor near the region called Galatia (modern day Turkey). Corinth is on an Isthmus on the south end of Macedonia (Greece) in an area called Achaia. Located between Athens and Sparta. Macedonia is to the north. A journey on foot from Ephesus could take one from Galatia to Macedonia and then south to Corinth.
  - ii. *See map*
- b. Timothy, Paul's faithful disciple, may also come to them and he wants him treated well. (vv. 10-11)
  - i. No reason for fear.
    1. That tells you something about the culture of the church that he was to warn them not to scare Timothy. Can you imagine saying that to a church prior to sending a pastor there?
  - ii. Don't despise him but send him.
- c. Apollos may also come later (v. 12)
- d. Notice there is cooperation, support, sending, receiving.
  - i. We do that when we receive and send missionaries that we support.
  - ii. Sometimes there are opportunities to open our homes to someone coming through town support raising to get to the mission field.
  - iii. 10% of all giving at UBC goes directly to missions. We have a committee that oversees that ministry. Most of the giving is ongoing but we also have some set aside to care well for our missionaries by meeting additional needs, providing opportunities for rest, and sending others from our church to visit and encourage them.
  - iv. Your giving already supports this, but you can engage directly by coming to open houses or special Sunday school classes in which a missionary provides an update, you can sign up for their newsletters so you know how to pray. We intentionally support fewer missionaries with more money so that we can be deeply invested in the ones we do support.
  - v. It doesn't mean individuals shouldn't also be involved, but it's to say that churches should be.
  - vi. Andy Johnson's book *Missions* was really helpful for our board in forming a policy to serve our missionaries well.

3. Four observations about ***decision*** making and the ***will*** of God.

*Note – not covering everything about decision making and the will of God – just four observations from this passage.*

- a. Consider your **desires**. (v. 12)
  - i. Paul encouraged Apollos to go but it wasn't his desire to at the time.
  - ii. Within the bounds of biblical obedience it's ok to consider what you want.
    1. What job do you want? What house do you want? What ministry do you want to serve in?
    2. Sometimes we over-spiritualize decision making to make it this mystical thing that if anything goes against our desires rather than considering our desires.
- b. Don't assume **your** desires equal **God's** desires. (v. 7)
  - i. Paul desired to remain with them for some time in Corinth – he previously had stayed with them for 18 months – but he recognized that it might not be God's will by including the phrase "If the Lord permits."
  - ii. **James 4:13-15** Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." <sup>14</sup> Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup> Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."
  - iii. Common practice for believers in the past to include the initials "D.V." in written letters after describing future plans. It stood for *Deo Volente* or "God willing."
- c. **Adversity** doesn't mean it isn't God's will. (v. 9)
  - i. There were many adversaries and a wide-open door for effective ministry.
  - ii. We can't interpret any speed bump, any difficulty, any problem as a sign that a certain decision "isn't God's will." Sometimes life is just hard. Sometimes there is opposition. Sometimes God is using that to develop our character and trust in Him. Sometimes those are the consequences of our own poor decisions that we have to work through. Sometimes it's just life in a broken world.
- d. Trusting in God doesn't prohibit **planning**.
  - i. In this passage people plan to give, plan to support, and plan trips.
  - ii. **Proverbs 15:22** Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.
  - iii. **Proverbs 21:5** The plans of the diligent *lead* surely to advantage, But everyone who is hasty *comes* surely to poverty.
  - iv. **Proverbs 16:9** The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.



1

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**Romans 15:25-27** but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. <sup>26</sup> For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

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**3 John 1:5-8** <sup>7</sup> For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup> Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

8





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