

Giving, Going, and Going On

1 Corinthians 16

Giving

- ❑ Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. Paul gives the Corinthians instructions about giving. Apparently, Paul was collecting money for the needy Christians in Jerusalem.¹
 - ❑ Some general principles may be drawn from this brief instruction.
 - Giving should be regular.²
 - “Each one”³ should give, “in keeping with his income.”⁴
1. In this case, the collection was for a particular purpose. What is significant about the Corinthians giving for “the poor among the saints in Jerusalem?”⁵ How might this relate to our giving today?⁶



📖 “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7, NIV).

Reflection & Application

- Read 2 Corinthians 8-9. As a Christian, are you giving for the Lord’s service? Have you given yourself “first to the Lord” (8:5)? How sincere is your love (8:8)? Are you a “cheerful giver?” (9:7). Reflect on this passage, and submit to God’s guidance in your giving.

Going

- ❑ Read 1 Corinthians 16:5-12. Paul speaks of *going* through Macedonia before *going* to Corinth. He speaks of Timothy’s *going* to Corinth, and then he speaks of Apollo’s *not going* to Corinth.



¹ In Paul’s letter to the Romans (2 years later), he wrote, “For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings” (Romans 15:26-27, NIV).

² They set aside money “on the first day of every week” (Sunday). Most churches have an “offering” every Sunday. As part of the worship service, an “offering plate” is passed. BCF does not “pass the plate,” but people can give by using the envelopes and collection boxes located in the hallway.

³ According to the Barna Research Group, 65% of adults gave money to their churches in 2004. Over the last 10 years, about 5-7% of churchgoers have “tithed” (see below), though this has dropped to 4% this year. Among “evangelical Christians,” about 97% gave money to their churches (and 23% tithed) in 2004. BCF is considered to be evangelical.

⁴ More literally “as he may prosper.” Many lived at a subsistence level, so giving would come out of one’s surplus, or prosperity. For many Christians, giving “in proportion to what [one] has earned” (TEV) means giving a particular percentage of one’s income. For example, many Christians accept the principle of the “tithe” (giving at least 10% of one’s income) based on Old Testament precedents and commandments (Genesis 14:17-20; Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Some Christians believe that the tithe is commanded for Christians today, while others believe the commandment passed away with the Old Covenant (though they may still accept the tithe as a good principle for giving).

⁵ In Corinthian culture, giving was motivated by getting something in return, either material or public honor and praise. Giving to strangers in a distance place (and of another ethnicity) was significant, both for the Corinthians and the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. For “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

⁶ A large portion of BCF giving goes to God’s work in other nations and cultures, where the need is greater. “At the present time [our] plenty will supply what they need” (2 Corinthians 8:14b).

- ❑ Paul is often used as an example of “knowing God’s will.” Paul was clearly called to a particular occupation (*Acts 9; 1 Corinthians 1:1*). He received direct, personal guidance through visions on several occasions (*Acts 16:6-10; 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 23:11*). However, his plans and decisions were not always based on such direct guidance (*1 Corinthians 16:5-9*).
2. What do we observe in verses 5-9 concerning Paul’s planning and decision making?⁷
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3. Paul says, “I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost,⁸ because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me” (*16:8-9, NIV*). What lessons can we learn from this combination of opportunity and opposition?⁹

Going On

- ❑ Read 1 Corinthians 16:13-24. In verses 13-14, Paul speaks of *going on* with God. He says, “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”
 - ❑ The beliefs and values of Christianity are opposed by the world. Thus the Christian must “be on his/her guard” and “stand firm in the faith.” The church in Corinth was supposed to influence the surrounding culture, but the surrounding culture was influencing the church. The same is true today. Thus Christians must be courageous and strong, by God’s grace.
 - ❑ The command in verse 14 is central to the Christian ethic, and it lies behind much of Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians. “Love builds up” (*8:1b*).
 - ❑ In verse 22, Paul writes, “Come, O Lord” (*Μαρانا θα, Marana tha*). The Christian life includes a confident expectation of the Lord’s return, and the completion of God’s plan of salvation. This blessed hope helps the Christian to keep “going on” in the present age.
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Reflection & Application

- Are you “going on” with God? Do you know Him? Have you entered into a relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ?
- As a Christian, are you “standing firm in the faith?” Or are the ideas, values, and behaviors of the world evident in your life? Review 1 Corinthians (and perhaps the handouts) and ask God to help you “stand firm in the faith” and “do everything in love.”

⁷ Paul seems to weigh the merits of various options before settling on a particular course of action. He reveals some uncertainty about what he will actually do. He is influenced by his desires and hopes, but does not presume. He will spend time with the Corinthians “if the Lord permits” (see James 4:13-15 concerning planning and presumption). He plans to stay in Ephesus because of particular opportunities and circumstances. Based on 2 Corinthians 1:15-2:4, Paul’s plans apparently changed, and he went to Corinth on a sudden, unexpected trip before going to Macedonia.

⁸ “Pentecost” – the Jewish Festival of Weeks (Exodus 23:14-17), when the firstfruits of the harvest were presented to God, 50 days after Passover. The Holy Spirit came upon the church on Pentecost (Acts 2).

⁹ Paul did not necessarily see this “open door” as a “sign” of God’s will. He simply wanted to make the most of every opportunity (Ephesians 5:16). He certainly did not see the opposition as a “sign” to go elsewhere. Opportunity and opposition often go together, especially in the Lord’s work, which is constantly opposed by the evil one.