

The Generosity of God 1 Corinthians 16

"The thrill of taking lasts a day. The thrill of giving lasts a lifetime." - Joan Marques

This is the season for giving... We already exchanged gifts... can I tell you how excited my dude, Titus was??? (He's still all about that thrill of taking!) Smiling from ear to ear, wouldn't go to sleep, so wired and hyped up that he was super emotional about Nintendo sports not working... tears...

I was so proud ... so intentional, so thoughtful, can I say it... so romantic... I got my wife some candlestick holders... But the candles... didn't fit. Crooked.

Some of our gifts go great. Some not so great. Some of the gifts we like. Some we are like where's the gift receipt and even if there's not a receipt I'll still take it back for the lowest historical price which is about 30% of what someone probably paid for it! Give it away

This is the season for giving.

Guess what... with God . . . every season is the giving season! God gives and gives and gives and gives.

"You can't outgive God." 1000% true.

Every good thing we enjoy in this life, if it's truly good, is a gift from God. Go check the facts in James 1:17, "Every good and perfect gift is from above..."

This morning we are going to consider the generosity of God... and Paul's final instructions invite us to...

TP: Enjoy three everyday gifts from God this Christmas.

[The church at Corinth needed HELP - all caps! Relationships, integrity, sex, singleness, marriage, how they worshiped, spiritual gifts... they needed HELP at every turn.]

The message of the cross is what HELPED them through all the mess (1 cor 2:2, 15:3-4). We are going to filter these final instructions regarding giving, planning and relationships through the good news of Jesus.

#1

1. Enjoy the gift of giving! (16:1-4)

(1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

Verse 1 tells us about a special offering Paul calls "the collection for the saints." Romans 15 & 2 Corinthians 8-9 tell us the focus of this campaign was to serve poor people in the Jerusalem church that was under significant persecution (cf. Gal . Many had been imprisoned, had lost their jobs, and yes, even lost their lives because of their commitment to Christ.

[[Perhaps this collection stemmed from the encouragement Paul during his first meeting with Peter, James, and John, who "asked [Paul] to remember the poor," which was "the very thing I was eager to do."]]

In these first two verses, we find *four principles* for giving.

Giving is a Partnership.

- When we give, we partner with God. God invites us into the work of caring for people and advancing his love mission, which often requires resources that cost money.
 - Verse 1 tells us God invited them to enjoy the gift of giving through the direction of Paul. This is what it means to be a Christian. We freely give what we have freely received (Matthew 10:8). Jesus said, "When you pray, when you fast, when you give..." It is the expectation.
 - And what a shift in perspective! It's not: "Oh, I *have to give*, but I'd really rather spend on me and my needs..." BUT, "I get to partner with God and what he is doing in my city and in the world." This partnership provides the foundation for us to partner...
- With other followers of Jesus.
 - Verse 1 tells us the Corinthians were joining the churches in Galatia in this endeavor of generosity.
 - Verse 2 says, "Each of you..." God doesn't want anyone to miss out on the gift of giving.
 - Like a skilled, world class football team, it takes all of us working together. (We're not going to talk about the World Cup this morning. We intentionally scheduled our service so that every fan who is mourning the results will not have to watch. That's how much we love you!)

Giving should be a Priority.

- Look at verse 2: "On the first day of every week..."
- When did followers of Jesus come together to worship Jesus? Sunday (cf. Acts 20:7)! Why? In remembrance & celebration that death could not defeat our King. 2,000 years later we still gather on Sunday because this is a day of life, victory, and hope!
- Paul says, when you come together, at the beginning of your week, you are to give a gift from what God has gifted you through your work. We hear echoes of the principle of offering "firstfruits." We don't bring God our leftovers after spending frivolously Monday-Saturday. We give first. "Give, Save, Spend." not "Spend, Save, Give."

Giving requires a Plan.

- What does Paul say? "Each of you is to put something aside and store it up."
- Giving should be strategic. It should be thoughtful. It should be intentional.
- "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- At the beginning of every year, Marsha and I set a budget (2023 - live on a budget). Every year, the first line is giving to our local church. We have given at least 10% every year of our marriage. Is it easy? No. Have we had to say "No" to other needs and opportunities because of it? Yes! Is it worth it? 100%
- Why the local church? Yes, we give to other kingdom causes, but the local church God's primary vehicle for accomplishing his mission in the world.

Giving should be Proportional

- Will we all contribute the same amount? No.
- What did verse 2 say, "each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper."
- Do you remember the story of Jesus sitting in the temple just days before his crucifixion? He sees the rich drop their big gifts into the offering box (Ching, Ching, Ching, Ching)... but then he sees a poor widow bring two small copper coins (clink, clink).
- The person who gave the least gave the most, and it lit up the heart of God!

We see Paul's financial integrity in verses 3-4. You guys handle the details. I'm not handling the money.

I'm so thankful we have a church full of people who enjoy the gift of giving!

Generosity Journey

First time (maybe this is your next step) -> Occasional (perhaps irregular and reactive, but growing) -> Intentional (what Paul describes here - regular, systematic and proportional) -> Sacrificial -> Legacy

We're not perfect. We've got room to grow, but so many of you experience the words of Jesus in Acts 20:35 —

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than receive." (Acts 20:35)

What is the greatest motive for our giving? The generosity of Jesus!

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9)

T: Enjoy the everyday gift of giving! #2

2. Enjoy the gift of planning! (16:5-12)

Some of you, LOVE... to plan. Others of you ride on struggle bus when it comes to planning. "Let's just go with the flow. We'll figure it out as we goooo, brooooo!" Spontaneity is not against the rules of the kingdom. We certainly need to be led by the Spirit, moment by moment, but who knows that a strategic plan can be just as Spirit-led as spontaneity.

Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 shows us our God is a God with a plan! And we'd be dead, without it. Thank you Jesus!

Let's learn about the gift of planning in verses 5-12.

(1 Corinthians 16:5-12)

Why Paul is fired up about the gift of planning?

- For starters, Paul loved people! (5-7)
 - I'm going to see my people in Macedonia. Those sisters & brothers in Philippi & Thessalonica, but I intend to get to you.

- And look at verse 7... Paul says, "I could fly in and fly out but I'm not trying to rush it. I want that quality time."
- Paul also loved ministry.
 - He loved served people. He loved telling people about Jesus. He loved praying with people, bringing God's healing power and words of life wherever he went.
 - Check verse 8... "I'm staying in Ephesus." Why Paul? Because (verse 9) "a wide door for effective work has opened for me." Who opens doors? God opens doors. Should we pray for open doors? No doubt! Colossians 4:3 — "At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ."
 - Paul loved ministry so much because he loved Jesus & people so much that he was willing to suffer for it. "For a wide door for effective work has opened to me, AND THERE ARE MANY ADVERSARIES."
 - The longer and deeper I go in this thing called ministry, the more I experience the reality of opposition. "Pastor Tanner, does that discourage you? When I take my eyes of Jesus, yes." But when I look back to him, the opposition and the adversaries remind me, like Nehemiah, I am, you are, we are "doing a GREAT WORK!" As my dude in RI loves to say: "The intensity of the opposition is because of the enormity of the gospel opportunity."
 - Paul loved to plan because Paul loved seeing the gospel advance. That's what apostles do - they push into new territory, and we all have apostolic pieces of our heart because we bear the image of the greatest apostle and missionary who left heaven on a mission to come to earth to bring us life - yes, I'm talking about Jesus Christ!"
- Finally, Paul loved sharing the work with others.
 - He tells about Timothy in verses 10-11 (spiritual son, younger side, perhaps a bit timid... going into a tough situation — Paul tries to set him up for a successful visit).
 - He talks about Apollos in verse 12. You guys are talking about: "I follow Paul. I follow Apollos." Apollos and I follow JESUS. He wants to get to you, but it's not in his plans right now.

Every plan... is an opportunity to trust God. "We can make plans, but God determines our steps." (Proverbs 16:9). That's why Paul says, "if the Lord permits" (in verse 7)|

In all of our planning, just like our giving, we are motivated by the gospel. He gave; we give. He loved; we love. But planning... yep! Turn the page - 2 Corinthians 1:18-20 - Paul is talking about his plans...

"As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory." (2 Corinthians 1:18-20)

T: Enjoy the gift of giving. Enjoy the gift of planning. #3...

3. Enjoy the gift of relationships! (16:13-24)

When I was younger, I would speed read the final verses like we find here. Paul was well connected... big surprise.

Now... these are, to me, some of the most sacred verses in the Bible.

(1 Corinthians 16:13-24)

- Verse 13 sounds like it's coming from a military commander: "Be watchful (stay alert!), stand firm in the faith (be immovable), act like men (the better translation is - "Be courageous" Paul is clearly addressing men and women here), "Be strong (act, move, love, with everything you've got!)"
 - If you listen close enough, you hear an echo of the ancient song found in Psalm 31:24, "Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the LORD."
 - Richard Hays says, "Authentic strength is grounded in trustful waiting." And by the way, WAITING in the Bible is not passive... WAITING is ANTICIPATING. I know my God is good! I know he's working in ways I cannot see. I know he's got good plans for me!
- Then Paul provides an instruction that summarizes this entire 16 chapter book: "Let all that you do be done in love" (16:14). Underline it. Highlight it. Memorize it. When you're driving to grandma's house and about to be around those family members who get on your last nerve: "Let ALL you do (even this, Lord?) be done in love."

Paul then gives some implications of this kind of love as he talks about people he loves.

- In verses 15-17, he tells the Corinthians to show love and respect to Stephanas, whose household was the first converts in the area of Corinth.
- In verse 18, we see that relationships are meant to refresh us! Stephan's, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (dope names) refreshed us by their visit!
 - I dare you to make this your prayer this Christmas. God, I'm going to be a refreshment... to pour water and life and love and encouragement into peoples' souls.
 - This might mean (yes, I'm going there) - leaving your phone in another room! What's more loving? Eye contact, iPhone... eye contact, iPhone - uh huh, uh huh, I'm sorry what did you say. FULLY PRESENT! That's the way of love, the way of Jesus! That might be the greatest gift you give. {p}

- Then In verse 19-20, he gives some shoutout to Team Jesus. Churches of Asia... they love you fam. Aquila and Prisca... they love you fam. All the fam here in Ephesus... they love you fam! I love our church. I love it with everything I've got, but let me go on record: I love the church of Jesus more. All churches, everywhere...
 - We are kingdom.... Other churches are not our competitors. They are teammates!
 - If we love our city more than our church, we win even when we lose, but we if love our church more than our city, we lose even when we win.

What did Jesus say in John 15:12

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

The gospel of Jesus motivates how we give, how we plan, and how we relate to others!

Something interesting happens as the letter comes to a close. Check verse 21... Paul picks up the pen (which tells us he dictated this letter to a scribe). He makes four statements. All of them point to us to the greatest relationship we are meant to enjoy, a relationship with Jesus Christ.

- “If anyone lacks love for Jesus, let them be accursed.” This sounds harsh, but Paul sounds it as a warning... Jesus is the only way back to a relationship with God. Any other pursuit of God apart from Jesus will leave us separated from God for eternity.
- “Our Lord, come!” Aramaic - Maranatha! There's nothing more we want than you Jesus.
- “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.”
- “My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.”

Love has the last word. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus provides the clearest, brightest, most undeniable showcase of the generosity of God.

Jesus said it himself: **“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)**

Have you received the greatest love, the generosity of God through God's greatest gift in the gift of his Son?

I discovered many years ago when God sent his greatest gift into the world, he put my name on it, so that I would know Jesus laid down his life for me, that I might live forever with him.

Acknowledge your need, receive the gift!

Pray....

We're going to sing one of Jen's songs. It's an invitation... God is waiting for you... run to him...

Our Prayer Team: If God is stirring in your heart to receive this gift, come forward and let our Prayer team pray over you... If there is anything on your heart that you want to pray about... a loved one in need, a friend who needs Jesus, something going on in your own life, come forward, as we seek God together!

FINAL WORD:

- Christmas... (invites...) - Schedule
- Response - App... Connect Card (Or you can go to www.redemptionhillchurch.com/cc): I commit to follow Jesus for the first time today!