

# 1 Corinthians 16:1-4: Give and Live

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A Northstar Sermon Series



## Outline

1. **Arrangement for the collection, 1-4**
  - a. Concern for regularity
  - b. Provision for accountability
2. **Paul's travel plans and commendations, 5-11**
  - a. Timothy, Apollos
3. **C. Exhortations and more commendations, 12-18**
  - a. Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus
4. **Final greetings, 19-24**
  - a. A kiss and a signature



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"Now about the collection for the saints: Do the same as I instructed the Galatian churches. On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need to be made when I come. When I arrive, I will send with letters those you recommend to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it is suitable for me to go as well, they will travel with me." (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

Surprised in my reading/research, most scholars treat this section of scripture as an afterthought, an appendage. But there is so much richness here! Grateful to Thiselton who said, *"An exposition of the resurrection of "the body" leads on to a matter of responsibility or action in the public world of relations between Christians."*

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Anthony Thiselton

### **"Now about"**

Paul has used this expression several times in this letter. Each time, he does so to indicate he is responding to 1) something the Corinthians have asked him through a letter or their emissaries or 2) something he had already talked about - we know he wrote a letter before 1 Corinthians ("I wrote to you in a letter..." - 1 Corinthians 5:9)

### **"the collection"**

This was not the regular collection

### **"for the saints"**

This was specifically designed to bless Christians.

### **"the Galatian churches"**

What did he instruct the Galatian churches? All we are aware of from his letter to the Galatians is a statement recognizing the need to support the poor:

"They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I had made every effort to do." (Galatians 2:10)

The "they" Paul referred to was the apostles in Jerusalem. He described a visit to Jerusalem in Galatians 2 where he presented his teaching (the gospel) to them to make sure that it was aligned with the teaching of the rest of the apostles. He had gotten so much pushback from legalistic Jewish Christians wherever he went, that he traveled to the "mother church" to sync up. They agreed completely, and this is the only caveat they gave him. Remember the poor. Perhaps in this we can see a principle - Paul was so much the entrepreneurial missionary/church planter/leader, that the apostles wanted to remind him to stay connected to the larger **Church**. Don't overlook compassion ministry outside of your own context. Remember other Christians - pray, give, go, encourage, and see yourself in solidarity with them as the family of God.

This comes through as he wrote the Corinthians, you are the body of Christ! **It's not about individualism. It's about being a part, playing your part and doing your part.**

Here, Paul addressed the reality of the collection and the mechanism for gathering and delivering the collection. From the information in Paul's other letters, we know

that the collection was a major undertaking among his Gentile congregations. In his letter to the Roman church, he said:

"Right now I am traveling to Jerusalem to serve the saints, because Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution **for the poor among the saints** in Jerusalem." (Romans 15:25-26)

The "collection" was not a welfare program for the poor of the world. It was intentionally targeting the poor in the church in Jerusalem. Some speculate that when many in the church sold their possessions in the early days of the church to provide need that they impoverished themselves to meet the needs of others. Many in the church get distracted by the great need in the world. But make no mistake, before we minister to the needs in the world, we minister to our own. Ministry to those in need in the church comes first. However, we don't stop there.

*"Generally, Christians have excelled in these efforts of practical ministry. For example, why do you think the Red Cross is named the Red Cross? It started as a Christian organization... Some have [mistakenly] thought that because Christians are commanded to help the poor, especially Christians in need, that this is more important than ministry needs and even the financial support of ministers of the gospel. But in 1 Timothy 5 Paul speaks" of some of the financial responsibilities of the church: (Guzik)*

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It is there that Paul gave Timothy, a leader in the church, some very practical instructions about how to steward the giving of the church:

"Support widows who are genuinely in need." (1 Timothy 5:3)

"But if anyone does not provide for his own family, especially for his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8)

"No widow is to be enrolled on the list for support unless she is at least sixty years old, has been the wife of one husband, and is well known for good works.." (1 Timothy 5:9-10)

"The elders who are good leaders are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says: Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain, and, "The worker is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:17-18)

"Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share.." (1 Timothy 6:17-18)

Paul wrote again to the Corinthians about giving in his next letter.

"Now concerning the ministry **to the saints**, it is unnecessary for me to write to you. For I know your eagerness, and I boast about you to the Macedonians, "Achaia has been ready since last year," and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you in this matter would not prove empty, and so that you would be ready just as I said. Otherwise, if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we, not to mention you, would be put to shame in that situation. Therefore I considered it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance the generous gift you promised, so that it will be ready as a gift and not as an extortion.

The point is this: The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously. Each person should

do as he has decided in his heart — not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:1-8)

## **Here are some principles we glean from "the collection:"**

- **Above and beyond.** This is intended to be above and beyond the Corinthians' regular giving to ministry.
- **All called.** He calls upon all to participate.
- **Weekly discipline.** Paul shares that setting money aside weekly is important. It's practical and very pastoral of him. It's much harder to scrape together an offering at end the end of the month, after expenses.
- **Regular review.** Paul suggests regular review - "**in keeping with how he is prospering.**" Most weren't paid like we are today - on salaried schedules. So they were coached to review their income weekly, and set aside a portion above what they have budgeted to give to the local church/ministry. If they are regular about this, he said, "**no collections will need to be made when I come.**"
- **Bigger belonging.** When we give to special needs and causes, we remind ourselves of a bigger belonging. We belong to the family of God, and though we may not know them and can't see them, we give in faith, knowing that one day, *their* generosity may meet *our* need.  
**"At the present time your surplus is available for their need, so that their abundance may in turn meet your need, in order that there may be equality."** (2 Corinthians 8:14)



# Principles from “the collection”



1. *Above and beyond*
2. *All called*
3. *Weekly discipline*
4. *Regular review*
5. *Bigger belonging*

## Broader principles on giving

- **Every Christian is expected to give proportionally.** There are various perspectives on the "minimum" (theological tithe vs sacrificial giving), but invariably these seem to want to find the baseline rather than remind us **to give**.
- We are to **give regularly** (first day of the week - Sunday, so in a gathering of believers).
- We are to **give obediently**.
- We are to **give in gratitude**. "For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings." (Hosea 6:6) ~ Jesus quoted this passage twice! (Matthew 9:13, 12:7)
- A few **revealed priorities for a church's giving** are: ministry support, individual support (with parameters), support of other believers in financial need/care, financial support of the ministers of the church. Some of us won't see our "financial goals for the church" in this list. That's ok. But whatever a church does with its money should be done with compassion, wisdom, unity, and faith.
- Trust church leaders to distribute church monies as directed. "When I arrive, I will send with letters those you recommend to carry your gift to Jerusalem." (3) It's the idea of approved leaders and representatives, with accountability.

- Scripture consistently teaches a **"theology of abundance."** We give not from a position of fear, or concern that our giving will tax God's ability to provide, but from one of faith. When we give, we are blessed.

"The person who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the person who sows generously will also reap generously... And **God is able** to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:6, 8)

### Give and live!



## Broader principles on giving



1. *Every Christian expected to give proportionally*
2. *Give regularly Give obediently*
3. *Give in gratitude.*
4. *Revealed priorities for a church's giving*
5. *Trust church leaders to distribute church monies*
6. *Embrace a "theology of abundance."*

### Giving Realities

Our Member Meeting tonight, we'll celebrate that we are once again in a surplus time of giving - our income has exceeded our expenses/ministry investments so far this year!

However, I will also share some giving realities. In full disclosure to all of you, I wanted to share some information - because there are a lot of people to thank... and there are some to encourage and challenge.

- Definition of "household."
- Disclaimer: I don't know.

# **Giving Realities at Northstar**



# Who's Giving?

# 2 Numbers

303 - current members    209 - "households"

## *Giving households*

Count	Giving \$
139	\$ 589,190.59
133	\$ 196,514.49
272	\$ 785,705.08

## *Non-giving households*

Member (Non-Giver) 70 33%

All members are expected to give. When members don't give, it gives us a gauge on obedience, of understanding of where we need to encourage some of our members in discipleship and faith. Non-giving church members may also indicate bigger issues.

But what we see here is **stunning**. We are in **surplus** even though 70 of our households have not given in 2024. It also leads us to **rejoice!** God not only supplied, but he supplied almost twice that many households to give who are not members in 2024!

Being aware of these realities help us shepherd and also encourage our members in faith. **It's a way we practice accountability. Speaking of....**

**“send with letters those”**

Awkward phasing. These would have been letters of recommendation. Letters that vouched for the character of the couriers, the intent of the gift (how it should be

spent) and the amount that was sent. It's vitally important in the church that wise accountability is in place in regard to financial matters.

1. **Offerings sent.** These monies were above and beyond and were intended to meet the needs of the church in Jerusalem.
2. **Letters.** Expressed intent and commended...
3. **Those.** Trustworthy, accountable leaders. Going in person meant so much.

We will vote as a church tonight in our member meeting on what we have allocated, in response to prayer and planning, for ministry for 2025. When we say the "church budget" it means so much more. It's a spiritual exercise! The last thing it is (and it is that) is an assessment of possibility. Church budgets are a local church's exercise in responding by faith to the forward call of God to make disciples, raise Christians to maturity, to preach the gospel, to feed the sheep, to send missionaries and to care for those in our church family and community who know the Lord but who need compassionate ministry.

## **Practical applications**

Opportunity to talk about **Bags of Joy** and **Holiday Missions Offering**. (Some additions to our HMO that will encourage you and give you a bigger vision for giving).



**“send with letters those”**



1. **Offerings sent**
2. **Letters**
3. **Those**

## **Giving/Offering Time**

A response to "grace abounding"

We often say, "At this time, we will receive our offering. Our offering is always a response to what God has done. It means that we think about what God has done - His abundant grace - and we don't try - we can't - to match that, but we respond in gratitude and generosity and worship, confident that what we give will be directed to support Jesus' work in our church, community and beyond, through Northstar and our partners.

We give because God gives. We give because God gave. We give because through God's generosity in sending His Son, we have been for-given. Now we have the joy of giving to others from what we've received, beginning with the gospel of Jesus and extending all the way to our financial ministry.

### **Our giving reveals our hearts.**

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21)

### **RESOURCES**

- *1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary*, Anthony Thiselton (Eerdmans: 2011)
- *1 Corinthians, Teach the Text Commentary Series* by Preben Vang (Baker: 2014)
- *The First Letter to the Corinthians (The Pillar New Testament Commentary)*, by Roy E. Ciampa (Eerdmans: 2010)
- *1 Corinthians (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, by David E. Garland (Baker: 2010)
- *1 Corinthians: Holiness and Hope of a Rescued People* (Focus on the Bible Series) by Paul Barnett (Christian Focus, 2011)
- *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)* by Gordon Fee (Eerdmans: 2014)
- *First Corinthians (Interpretation Series)* by Richard Hays (John Knox Press, 1997)
- *Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Corinthians* by Richard L. Pratt (Holman: 2000)
- *1 Corinthians 16 (Enduring Word Commentary)* by David Guzik