

CGYG & LIFE Bible Study: 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

For Discussion: What opportunities do you see in your daily life to demonstrate biblical values or live out biblical imperatives? What are some of these specific principles/goals and how are they relevant for informing your response or attitude to the situations you face?

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

For review: In 1 Corinthians 15:35-58, Paul concluded his teaching on the resurrection of believers with illustrations from nature showing that the principles of resurrection and the glorified resurrection body have already been revealed in creation. Plants and animals, the natural and the spiritual, terrestrial and celestial bodies all bear witness to different aspects of what God has done in Christ and will do in us when He returns. In the end, both the living and the dead must be transformed to bear the image of the last Adam to be fit for life in the coming kingdom. Having finished with the weightier issues of doctrine and rebuke, Paul concludes his letter with responses to some matters raised by the Corinthians, updates regarding his travel plans and those of his companions, and greetings from friends and fellow believers.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Paul begins this section of his letter with instructions for an offering that was to be collected for the poor believers in Jerusalem. What principles can be seen in Paul's instructions for the giving and handling of monetary offerings?

- Giving should be done on a regular basis.
- Each person has a part in the giving.
- The amount given is to be in relation to the degree that we have prospered (there is no required amount or proportion).
 - There is no comparison with others and no reason for guilt if God has not enabled you to give as much as others.
- Giving on the same day as the gathering for corporate worship helps us to see the giving as an act of worship.
- Our possessions are to be used to bless and bring relief to others, not only for the benefit of our own local group of believers.
 - In giving to the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem (v.3), the Corinthians could demonstrate a love and unity with their fellow brothers in Christ (i.e., suffering together as one body, bearing one another's burdens).
- This method of giving causes us to continually evaluate our resources and to come prepared to give, helping to make our offering thoughtful and deliberate instead of impulsive (spur of the moment) or reluctant (**2 Cor. 8:12-15, 9:7**).
- The offering was to be handled by trusted and reliable people, approved men of integrity (v.3).
 - Paul sought to be above reproach when it came to the delivery of the gift. It was to be carried by vetted members of the Corinthian church. Even if Paul was to accompany the gift to Jerusalem, he would not be doing it alone (v.4).

Read 1 Corinthians 16:5-18

In the course of laying out his plans and instructions for the Corinthians, Paul mentions several people by name. What does he consider worth noting about these people?¹ How were the Corinthians to relate to them in light of what Paul brings to their attention?²

¹Timothy was carrying on the work of the Lord, like Paul, and was on his way back to him (v.10-11).

²Put him at ease, do not despise him, help him on his way (i.e., treat Timothy as they would treat Paul – compare v.6 and 11).
-Some of the Corinthians did not recognize Paul's authority and were not on good terms with him and Timothy was his known associate.

-Timothy also had a timid disposition (**2 Tim. 1:7**) and was very young (**1 Tim. 4:12** was written years after 1 Corinthians).

¹Apollos was unwilling to visit them sooner even at Paul's strong urging but would visit them when he had the opportunity (v.12).

-“Now concerning” indicates that the Corinthians had made mention of Apollos in their previous letter to Paul, possibly asking for him to visit them.

-Paul was not jealous of Apollos but urged him to go to Corinth even though the Corinthian's had made the two of them rallying points for their division (1:12). The two showed themselves as united by Paul's recommendation of Apollos's visit.

²There is an implicit instruction for the Corinthians to be patient and wait for Apollos.

¹The household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia and had devoted themselves to the service of the saints (v.15).

-Being first among the believers and having been personally baptized by Paul (1:16) they could have become proud, but they chose a life of fervent service to the saints. Paul distinguishes them for their devotion and servanthood (cf. 15:58).

-Paul includes with them those who join in the same work and who “labor at it” (v.16 – NIV84).

²Paul elevates the household of Stephanas and those who laboured diligently as they did by calling for the Corinthians to be subject (“submit” – NIV84) to them (v.16) – their devotion to serving was the very reason for this.

¹Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had gone to visit Paul in person. The three of them made up for the absence of the rest of the Corinthians and refreshed Paul's spirit (v.17-18).

-Their refreshing Paul's spirit (v.17) appears to be part of a broader ministry as they had done the same among the Corinthians (v.18).

²Paul says that such people deserve recognition, "'know' them in their true worth and treat them accordingly." – Robert Jamieson

²Paul affirms that the pathway to greatness in God's kingdom goes through humility and servanthood.

-Paul himself highlights the work of others, giving encouragement and endorsement to support their work, rather than competing for glory or recognition for himself.

What summary words of instruction does Paul give to the Corinthians in verses 13-14?¹ What makes these words an appropriate encapsulation of his teachings on which to conclude?²

¹Be watchful (v.13) – A posture of vigilance and being on guard (lest they be surprised by the enemy) (**Matt. 26:41**).

-In the context of where this verse occurs, it seems that part of what the Corinthians were to watch out for was the influence of worldly wisdom, the type of thinking that would cause them to despise and dismiss Timothy and place too much emphasis and importance on Apollos.

¹Stand firm in the faith (v.13) – Be steadfast *with a firm grounding in Christ* (**Gal. 5:1, Phil 4:1**)

-This was especially relevant given the events of chapter 15, the integrity of their faith was being threatened (15:1-2, 58).

¹Act like men (v.13) – Be "men of courage" (NIV84), "quit you like men" (KJV) (**Ps. 31:24**).

-There is an implicit understanding of what a man ought to be => courageous *in obedience to God*.

¹Be strong (v.13) – Be strengthened in the *strength of God*, not in our own resources (**Eph. 6:10, 2 Tim. 2:1**).

¹Do everything in love (v.14) – Not only in the exercise of our spiritual gifts.

-“Love is more than an accompaniment of Christian actions. It is the very atmosphere in which the Christian lives and moves and has his being.” – Leon Morris

²Paul's words spoke directly to the issues they were experiencing in Corinth.

-His use of military terminology points to the fact that they were within a conflict and his need to remind them of these things shows their failure to maintain the discipline and the standards needed to put up a good fight.

-Love was keenly missing from all their interpersonal interactions with destructive results (e.g., factions, conflicts with Paul, sexual immorality, lawsuits, mistreatment of the weak and the poor, consequences to corporate life and corporate worship).

²There is a balance between being hard and resisting/fending off on one hand (v.13) and being tender and caring/drawing in on the other (v.14).

Read 1 Corinthians 16:19-24

Who is Paul referring to in his mention of those who have no love for the Lord (1 Cor. 5:11-13)?¹ Why is his condemnation of them so strong?²

¹Paul's reference to those who have no love for the Lord is found in the middle of the greetings to the people of Corinth, the people he was referring to were among the congregation being addressed.

-He had already established that those outside the church are not within church's purview when it comes to disciplinary action, but those inside the church are (5:12).

²Those people had convinced others that they were true followers of Christ when they were not. From that position, they could cause a lot of harm to the church (cf. 15:12). The condemnation is severe because the stakes are so high since it is the body of Christ that is being threatened.

²The curse that Paul calls on those who have no genuine love for the Lord but pass themselves off as those who are committed to Him is the same curse that he calls on those who preach a false gospel (**Gal. 1:8-9**) and is translated in Galatians in the NIV84 as being "eternally condemned."

²Paul's focus is once again on the centrality of love. Love for Christ is the issue of ultimate importance, which is to trump love for self (pride) or even for godly human leaders (e.g., Paul, Apollos, or Cephas).

Reflection and application

Paul's focus in this final section shows, in practice, his commitment to the values of God, which include the building of God's kingdom (expanding it as well as growing its members), promoting unity and fellowship among believers (living a "one body" life in mutual care and concern), speaking up for others (pursuing right treatment and kingdom values), and loving the saints (including those with whom he had disagreements). Even in seemingly mundane matters, Paul's own choices and instructions to the Corinthians are consistent with what he taught them. At the conclusion of his letter, the Corinthians would have many lessons on which to think back and respond. The same is true for his readers today. Let us prayerfully consider the many moments and decisions that fill our days and how God's Word speaks meaningfully to each of them, seeking to truly see life through the lens of Scripture. Then will we be able to consider even choices that seem merely routine or a matter of preference and seek God's enabling to approach them with an intentional pursuit of His glory (1 Cor. 10:31) and our growth in Christlikeness.