

## Guidelines For Gracious Giving

### 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Introduction: In survey after survey, when lost people are asked, “What do you think the church wants from you?”, the answer is “my money.” Now, let's be clear, God does not want the money of unbelievers. He wants them! But, God does want the money of His children because God's work is to be financed by God's people. It has been this way since the beginning. In the early days of the church they took up an offering! Paul makes this crystal clear in the final chapter of 1 Cor. (cf. also 2 Cor. 8-9), 1 Cor. 16.

Paul wants to encourage the Corinthians to be generous and to excel in the grace of giving (cf. 2 Cor. 8:7-8). We know from another letter that Paul wrote that this collection was for the poor and suffering among Jewish Christian brothers and sisters in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:26). The words “now concerning” (16:1) introduces a subject that had not been discussed before and likely reflects a question the Corinthians had asked about participating in this offering (cf. 7:1). (Blomberg, *TNAC*, 323). The Corinthians evidently wanted to be included in participating in this offering along with other churches that Paul was appealing to for help. Paul proceeds in an extremely practical manner to talk about things like the “where,” “when,” and “what” of giving. Paul was dealing with an extremely specific

situation. But Blomberg is surely right when he says, “We may take Paul’s principles for giving, ... as widely applicable to comparable situations of need...” (Blomberg, *TNAC*, 126).

So, as we examine the pattern of giving in the early church, we can also see some giving guidelines that should help every believer that wants to exercise their stewardship responsibility of supporting both the work of the church and meeting the needs of those who are in need. In several very clear and practical ways, Paul gives us a model that shows how Christians should be financially faithful to the church and how the church should be financially faithful as they manage those finances.

#### I. There should be partnership in giving 16:1

The instructions for this giving begins in verse 1. “Now about the collection for the saints: Do the same as I instructed the Galatian churches.” (16:1). In the 1<sup>st</sup> century church, the mother church in Jerusalem was experiencing great difficulty. This church was mainly made up of Jewish believers which means almost that entire body of believers would have been persecuted for their faith from the very beginning, both by the Jewish community and Rome. There was a high cost to faith in those days. You could expect to be socially ostracized, economically compromised, religiously disenfranchised, and physically

brutalized. As a believing Jew, you could be excommunicated from the Synagogue, banned from the temple, and be considered “persona-non-grata” in the community. Besides that, Jerusalem was in the middle of a great depression economically. They were having to care for thousands of new converts who had come to Christ, many of whom were in desperate need of financial help. Paul had sent out a communiqué to several Gentile churches he had founded asking them to help their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem (see Rom. 15:26-28). Everyone knew what this offering was to be dedicated to – it had a specific purpose. And, churches were to come together to address this problem.

Giving should be a team effort not a solo event. We all do our part and do what we can. We see a need, we give to meet that need.

## II. There should be a pattern in giving

16:2

Now when was this offering to be brought, set aside and given? “On the first day of the week...” (16:2a). Why specifically the first day of the week? First, this refers of course to Sunday. Blomberg is correct when he says this verse is the first known reference to a weekly offering as a part of Christian worship when the church gathered together (Blomberg, *TNAC*, 324). He further notes the fact that this was to be done on Sunday strongly suggests that the first day of the week, (Sunday), not the seventh day of the week, (the Sabbath), had come to

be the special day of the week for Christians to gather in worship (Blomberg, *TNAC*, 324).

Also, the day came to be called “The Lord’s Day,” and Christians, it seems, almost certainly gathered together on that day to celebrate the resurrection of Christ (Schreiner, *TNTC*, 328). Now, it must be noted that the text did not specifically say it was to be collected at church, but Mere & Harris raise a great question, “But then why mention doing it on Sunday, when they could just as well do it regularly at home at other times? The meaning must rather be that the Christians were to bring their offerings to church on Sunday since that was the day they were to assemble for worship.” (Acts 20:7, cf. Rev. 1:10) (Mere & Harris, *TEBC*, 121).

Further, there is a theological reason why this makes sense. When the church gathered on the first day of the week it was always to worship the risen Lord, and giving should be a part of our worship. The early church could not conceive of having a worship service without people giving.

In its purest form worship is not about getting; it is about giving. You can give without worshipping, but you cannot worship without giving. Now, it needs to be said that worship is not primarily about getting something from God, but to give something to God. When you worship you give your voice in exaltation

as you praise the character of God. You give your ear and concentration as you listen to the Word of God. You give your mind in meditation as you think about the things of God. You give your heart in adoration as you bask in the love of God, and you give your offering in commemoration as you remember the goodness of God. This is not to say all giving should only be given to any specific church, but it is to say that the first financial gift we give to God should be to the work of the church. If you love God you will love God's church and if you love God's church you will give to God's church.

There are three words not to be missed in verse 2 and they are very important. Those words are, "...each of you." (16:2a). To state the obvious, each of you means every one of you. Paul makes it plain that everybody should give something to this offering. There are no exemptions, exceptions, or excuses. Nobody gets a pass. Nobody gets a get out of jail free card. When it comes to giving we are to participate whether we are rich or whether we are poor, whether it is a gold coin from a rich man or a little mite from a widow (Mare & Harris, *TEBC*, 121). Giving is to be a family affair with all of us pitching in. So, everyone was to come together on the first day of the week as the church gathered for worship. Giving, as a act of worship, was to be systematic – not a hit and miss proposition. Every first day of the week everyone was to “put something aside.” Interestingly, most Christians who give something or

nothing fall into three categories. 1) Many people give spontaneously (they are presented with a cause or an emergency or something that burdens them so they give). That is one way to give and some giving should be spontaneous, but that is not God's primary way of giving. 2) Some people give sporadically. They just give when they feel like it. So, depending on their frame of mind, or the performance of the stock market, or how high or low interest rates are, or how much confidence they have in the economy, they give. That again is not God's way of giving. By the way: people who give spontaneously and sporadically usually give sparingly too. Their giving is not generous or sacrificial. They just want that good feeling that they have at least given something. 3) The best way to give, and I believe God's way to give, is systematically. We should give with a steadfast determination that is often as our weekly or monthly pay. We should have a steadfast determination to give some portion of that back to God's work and to people who are more needy than we are. We should have a steadfast determination of what we are going to give ahead of time, where we are going to give it, and when we are going to give it.

Now, giving is not merely a cookie-cutter exercise where everybody gives exactly the same amount. Paul says, "...each of you is to put something aside and save (*ESV*, "store it up") in keeping with how he is prospering..." (16:2b).

Giving is to be appropriate to one's means and what one has at his disposal. Blomberg notes "Neither here nor in any other New Testament text is the tithe taught as incumbent on Christians." (Blomberg, *TNAC*, 236). While I agree with this observation, there is more that needs to be said in light of the totality of Scripture. There is nothing in the New Testament that would lead us to give, under grace, any less than a Jew was required under the law (Mal. 3:10). That is spiritually unthinkable! I think tithing (10%), in principle, is a good place to start our giving, but it is a terrible place to stop. We should seek to grow in the grace of giving. (ex. My own giving pilgrimage).

We must remember the context of the prior chapters of this book. The emphasis has been on the gospel; the message that Christ gave his life to pay for the sins of the world. Therefore, our lives should be lived in gratitude of all that God has given to us and done for us. The key word in all of this is grace (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9). No one put it better than Adrian Rogers when he said, "Any Christian who would give less under grace than a Jew would give under the law is a disgrace to grace."

### III. There should be protection in giving

16:3-4

Paul shifts the focus from the people who are giving their gifts to the church itself, those who are both going to receive the offering and then give the

offering to the church in Jerusalem. “When I arrive, I will send with letters those you recommend (*ESV*, “accredit by letter”) to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it is suitable (*ESV*, “advisable”) for me to go as well, they will travel with me.” (16:3-4). We indeed have a responsibility to give to God’s work, but the corollary to that is when we give to God’s work we have the right to know where our money is going to be used and that it will be properly handled. Paul told the Corinthians to recommend men of integrity and honesty to transport the money. Things never change because as Schreiner points out, “we know from II Corinthians 8:16-24, that Paul was concerned about the men who would bring this gift since religious hucksters often would make off with the money.” (Schreiner, *TNTC*, 329).

With responsibility comes accountability. This gift, in tangible funds, will be carried directly to Jerusalem. There were no credit cards, wire transfers, ATMs, or even checks from a bank. You had the right to know exactly how much money was originally given and how much money finally arrived. There was double accounting of what was given and where the money ended up. There was final accounting back to the church that gave the money. In other words, the money was not only to be given in the church, and to the church, and for the church, it was to be managed by the church. It is incumbent upon



those of us who give money to God's work to do everything possible to make sure God's money, his money, is always used correctly, properly, and wisely.

One final thing should not be missed. It is not coincidental or incidental that the offering of these Gentiles to these Jewish believers was to be brought by the Gentile believers themselves. Paul wanted to make sure that these Jewish believers take special note not of just what was given, but who gave it (Hayes, *Interpretation*, 285).

Conclusion: This chapter is a refreshing reminder that even the early church understood the importance of giving in the life of the church and in its worship. It gives us some wonderful examples of how money should be given, distributed, and managed in such a way that the needy are ministered to, the gospel is spread, and the church is blessed.

## 14 Principles of Grace Giving in 2 Corinthians 8-9

8:1-4	<p>Principle #1 – Outward circumstances and difficulties should not inhibit generosity in giving.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*The Macedonian churches were not giving out of their abundance; rather, they were giving generously out of their poverty.</li> <li>*They gave, not because they had to give, but because they wanted to give.</li> <li>*Their giving far exceeded their financial ability.</li> <li>*They viewed this special offering as a privilege, not as an obligation.</li> <li>*Giving is viewed as a Christian “grace.”</li> <li>*Joy and generosity are twins – they accompany one another.</li> </ul>
8:5	<p>Principle #2 – All financial giving should be preceded by self-giving to Jesus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*They first gave themselves to the Lord.</li> </ul>
8:6, 7	<p>Principle #3 – Believers should seek to excel in the “grace of giving.”</p>
8:6, 10, 11; 9:5	<p>Principle #4 – Worthy stewardship goals should be brought to completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Finish what you begin.</li> <li>*In spiritual things, there is value in completing what you start.</li> </ul>
8:8, 9, 24	<p>Principle #5 – Generous giving gives evidence of the sincerity of one’s love.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*One’s motivation for giving should always be love for the Savior and the saints.</li> </ul>

8:8, 9	<p>Principle #6 – There is a connecting link between “the grace of God’ and “the grace of giving.”</p> <p>*The grace of God becomes the supreme motivating factor in true Christian stewardship.</p> <p>*Our giving should be rooted in His giving.</p>
8:12	<p>Principle #7 – A willingness to give is more important than the amount given.</p>
8:13-15	<p>Principle #8 – In the economy of God, the sufficiency of some ministers to the deficiency of others.</p>
8:16-21	<p>Principle #9 – The expenditure of God’s money should be done judiciously.</p> <p>*To honor the Lord.</p> <p>*To do vital ministry.</p> <p>*To avoid any type of criticism.</p>
9:1, 2	<p>Principle #10 – Generous, spiritual giving will have a positive influence on others’ giving.</p>
9:5-7	<p>Principle #11 – The attitude in which a gift is given is of utmost importance to God-give cheerfully and willingly, not grudgingly.</p>
9:8-11	<p>Principle #12 – Generosity moves the heart of God to supply more seed and meet all needs.</p> <p>*All grace</p> <p>*Always</p> <p>*All sufficiency</p> <p>*All things</p>
9:11-14	<p>Principle #13 – Generosity will result in praise and thanksgiving to God.</p>
9:15	<p>Principle #14 – Generous giving is the natural response to God’s indescribable gift, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.</p>

