

Gospel Partnerships: Giving, Serving, and Going for Christ

1 Corinthians 16:1–12

BIG IDEA: *Christ has conquered death, secured our eternal victory, and united us into His global family, so believers are called to live out that resurrection life through faithful giving, selfless service, and genuine partnership in the work of the gospel.*

CONTEXT/BACKGROUND: Paul is concluding his first letter to the Corinthians. He's spent fifteen chapters correcting doctrine and calling for holy living, climaxing in the resurrection chapter. Now, in **chapter 16**, he shifts to practical matters:

- A **collection** for the suffering believers in Jerusalem (vv. 1–4).
- **Plans for ministry travel** and partnership (vv. 5–9).
- **Commendation of faithful coworkers**, like Timothy and Apollos (vv. 10–11).

This passage shows that **true resurrection faith leads to real-world faithfulness** — giving, serving, and working together in the mission of Christ.

1. Give Faithfully to the Work of the Gospel (vv. 1–4)

A. Giving is a Corporate Responsibility (vv. 1, 3–4)

- The “*collection for the saints*” was for believers in Jerusalem suffering from famine and persecution (Rom. 15:25–26). Paul coordinated a cross-church effort — evidence that the gospel unites believers in compassion across geography and culture. It was a unified mission shared by various churches.
- The Corinthians weren't just to receive teaching; they were to participate in generosity. They were called to *organize* compassion, not just *feel* it.

B. Giving Should be Regular and Intentional (v. 2) “*On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside...*” Here, Paul calls for systematic, planned giving — not spontaneous guilt offerings. The rhythm of weekly worship reminds believers that generosity is a regular act of gratitude to God.

C. Paul gives a Simple Stewardship Plan (vv. 2–3):

- **Priority** — “*the first day of the week*” (giving to God first, not last).
- **Personal** — “*each of you*” (no believer is exempt).
- **Proportional** — “*as he has prospered*” (God doesn't ask for equal gifts, but equal sacrifice).

Application: *Giving is an act of worship, not an obligation. We don't give to earn favor, but joyfully because grace has already been given to us.*

2. Serve Wisely in the Plan of God (vv. 5–12)

A. Paul was Strategic — but Flexible — in His Service (vv. 5–8). His life demonstrates that resurrection hope fuels resilient ministry. Paul models a servant who plans diligently but submits his plans to God's will (“*if the Lord allows*”). Paul was willing to adapt as God led Him.

B. God Opens Doors of Opportunity (v.9)

- Paul saw ministry not as occasions of random chance, but as a set of divine appointments. “*A wide door for effective ministry has opened for me.*”
- When we believe God has opened a door, we should walk through it — even if it comes with opposition.

- Success and struggle often come together. Think of when Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. He held a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other (Neh. 4:17). God's work always meets resistance — but also bears fruit.

C. God Uses Ordinary People for Extraordinary Purposes (vv. 5–12)

- Ministry is not a solo act. Paul doesn't serve alone — he mentions Timothy, Apollos, and the churches. Ministry was a shared labor.
- The resurrection doesn't just inspire heroes; it mobilizes helpers.
- God multiplies His work through ordinary people who make themselves available. Faithfulness in small things is greatness in God's sight.

Application: *Be available, not perfect. God opens doors for those who are willing to walk through them.*

3. Support and Encourage Gospel Workers (vv. 10–12)

“If Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear while with you, because he is doing the Lord's work, just as I am.”

A. Honor Those Who Labor for the Lord (vv. 10–11a)

- Paul reminds the church to honor and encourage those who labor in ministry. Timothy was young and timid (1 Tim. 4:12), but Paul insists the church respect him. Age and style are not the measure — *faithfulness is*.
- Churches should value both seasoned leaders and younger servants.
- Paul knew that if the Corinthians were overly critical or dismissive, Timothy's zeal could be diminished.
- Harshness or lack of support from fellow believers can crush the confidence of those trying to serve Christ. When believers affirm and strengthen those who serve, it gives them renewed perseverance to keep going. A kind word, a prayer, or a simple “thank you” can help someone press on in ministry through discouragement.
- Paul reminds the Corinthians that how they treat their ministers and fellow servants matters. God calls His church to be a community where gospel workers are strengthened, not drained — where words build up rather than tear down.

B. Work Together in Unity (vv. 11b–12)

- Paul's mention of Apollos shows maturity — once a source of division, he now becomes an example of unity. No rivalry, just cooperation. (See also 1 Cor. 3:4–9). Living for Christ and the Gospel means partnership not rivalry.
- Gospel work is a team effort, not a competition.

Application: *Support your pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders. Pray for them. Encourage them. Give generously to their work.*

PUTTING IT ALL INTO PRACTICE:

Paul ties everything together: The resurrection hope of chapter 15 leads to resurrection living in chapter 16.

- ✓ *Because Christ is risen, we give faithfully. Make generosity your habit.*
- ✓ *Because Christ is sovereign, we serve wisely. Look for the doors God opens.*
- ✓ *Because Christ is victorious, we support joyfully. Encourage and Strengthen those laboring in ministry.*