

Small Group Study Guide: 1 Corinthians 16

****"Faithful Giving, Faithful Living, and Finishing Well"****

Sermon Overview

This study concludes our journey through 1 Corinthians, focusing on Paul's practical instructions about giving, ministry relationships, encouragement, and maintaining faithfulness in challenging times.

Key Takeaways

1. ****Biblical Giving is Personal and Planned**** - We should prayerfully determine what to give between us and God, not under pressure or compulsion.
2. ****Flexibility in Ministry**** - We make plans, but we must remain flexible to God's leading ("if the Lord permits").
3. ****Opposition Doesn't Mean Wrong Direction**** - Great ministry opportunities often come with great adversaries.
4. ****Encouragement Matters**** - We should be people who refresh others' spirits, not just bring problems.
5. ****Stand Firm in Faith**** - We're called to "act like men/women of courage" - being unmovable in faith while acting in love.

Discussion Questions

Biblical Stewardship (1 Cor 16:1-4)

****Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-8****

1. What principles for giving does Paul establish in these verses? How does this differ from what you may have experienced in church culture?
2. Paul says to "lay something aside" before coming to church. Why is it important to prayerfully decide what to give before we're in the moment?
3. The sermon outlined guidelines for church benevolence (helping the needy). Which of these surprised you? Why do you think accountability and discernment are important in helping others?
4. ****Personal Application:**** Have you established a pattern of regular, prayerful giving? If not, what steps could you take this week to seek God's direction in this area?

Plans and Flexibility (1 Cor 16:5-9)

****Read 1 Corinthians 16:5-9 and James 4:13-17****

5. Paul makes detailed travel plans but adds "if the Lord permits." What does this teach us about the balance between planning and surrendering to God's will?

6. Paul says a "great and effective door has opened" in Ephesus, but adds "there are many adversaries." How does this challenge the modern idea that "if God is in it, everything will be easy"?

7. Share an example from your life where you faced opposition while doing something you believed God called you to do. How did you respond? What was the outcome?

8. ****Personal Application:**** Where in your life do you need to hold your plans more loosely and add "if the Lord permits"? What would that look like practically?

Encouragement and Relationships (1 Cor 16:10-18)

****Read 1 Corinthians 16:10-18****

9. Paul instructs the Corinthians to receive Timothy "without fear" and not to "despise him." Why was Paul concerned about how they would treat his young protégé?

10. Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus "refreshed Paul's spirit." What does it mean to refresh someone's spirit? Can you think of someone who has done this for you?

11. The sermon mentioned that these men came to Paul to give encouragement, not to get something or point out problems. How can we be more intentional about being encouragers rather than consumers in our church relationships?

12. ****Personal Application:**** Who in your life needs their spirit refreshed this week? What specific action can you take to encourage them?

Standing Strong (1 Cor 16:13-14)

****Read 1 Corinthians 16:13-14****

13. Paul gives five commands: "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" and "let all that you do be done with love." Why do you think he adds that last command about love?

14. The sermon mentioned we can get "wrapped up in our emotions and feelings" and "easily offended." How does this affect our witness? What does it mean to "act like men/women" in our faith?

15. How do we balance being bold and courageous in our faith while still being loving and not offensive?

16. ****Personal Application:**** In what area of your life do you need to "stand fast" this week? How can you do so with both courage and love?

Choose one or two of these to commit to this week:

- ****Giving:**** Prayerfully seek God's direction about your giving. Set aside a specific amount before next Sunday.
- ****Flexibility:**** Identify one area where you're holding too tightly to your plans. Write "if the Lord permits" on a card as a reminder to surrender control.
- ****Encouragement:**** Reach out to three people this week specifically to refresh their spirit—send a note, make a call, or meet for coffee with the sole purpose of encouraging them.
- ****Courage:**** Identify one situation where you've been timid in your faith. Take one bold step this week while maintaining a loving attitude.
- ****Service:**** Look for an opportunity to serve in your church or community without seeking recognition or personal benefit.

Reflection Questions for Personal Time

- How have I been like the Corinthians in wanting to do things "my way" rather than God's way?
- Am I a person who refreshes others' spirits or drains them?
- Where am I facing opposition that might actually be confirmation I'm in God's will?
- Is my giving between me and God, or am I influenced by pressure or comparison?

Closing Prayer Points

- Thank God for His faithfulness throughout the book of 1 Corinthians
- Pray for wisdom in giving and stewardship
- Ask for courage to stand firm in faith while acting in love
- Pray for opportunities to encourage and refresh others this week
- Ask God to help the group be flexible to His leading

Memory Verse

****1 Corinthians 16:13-14**** - "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love."