

Giving God's Way

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 - NCBC, January 17, 2016

Main Point: **God's grace produces intentional giving.**

- Giving is an act of worship (15:58-16:1)
- Giving represents your priorities (16:2)
- Giving reflects faith in God's provision (16:2)
- Giving reflects spiritual trustworthiness (16:3-4)

Application: **Be intentional to worship God in generous giving.**

Opening Announcements:

Prayers for the family of Austin Mauerman.

1 Peter 1:24-25 *All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*

Recruiting for hospitality hosts to serve at our Church Information Desk. See today's Worship Folder or Pam Yoder to learn more.

<<Jesus Paid It All>>



Chapter 15 of **1 Corinthians** ends with these verses,

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.
⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*

All praise to the Jesus – He paid it all!

I would invite you now to prepare for the public reading of God's Word from **1 Corinthians chapter 16**. If you do not have a Bible with you today, our ushers are coming now to give you a Bible. Please catch their attention as they pass by and it would be our joy to give you a Bible to use this morning. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

This January we are focusing on key Discipleship themes. Next week we will celebrate Sanctity of Life Sunday as our own supported missionaries – John & Missy Camiola will help focus our attention on **the power of Christ for the broken.**

Then the last weekend in January is going to be very special. We are planning a special commissioning service for our most recent elders during both morning services. Then during the Sunday School hour, everyone is invited to attend our **Annual Meeting** here in the Family Center. This will be a very special time for our church family. You really don't want to miss this. We will be receiving some new members into our church, and hearing our leadership's spiritual and financial priorities for the next 12 months of our ministry together. To help you come prepared to worship Christ with us at that meeting, **our ushers will be handing out copies of our 2015 Annual Report at the end of today's worship service.** Additional copies are also available at the Welcome Desk. Please take some time to read through these reports – and thank God for His astounding mercy towards our church family.

Our Scripture reading for today is **1 Corinthians 16:1-4.** You can find this text on page **962** of the Bibles we've handed out. Please stand with me now in honor of God's Word as I read from **1 Corinthians 16:1-4**, reading from the **English Standard Version**:

Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something

aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. ³ And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

Thus says the Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

Have you ever noticed how much of the Scripture relates to our money? God's Word actually says more about money than it says about faith, heaven, hell, or prayer!

That's right. The Bible contains more than **2,350** verses on money and possessions.¹ **16 of Christ's 38 parables** deal with our use of money, wealth, or possessions. Nearly **1/3 of the Sermon on the Mount** addresses topics related to money. In fact **nearly 15% of Jesus' words in Scripture** are in relation to money and possessions!²

These facts are simply astounding. If we didn't know better, we might be inclined to think that God really wants our money.

Is this true? Does the One who owns all the cattle on the hills, and all the gold in the hills, desperately depend on our sharing with Him for His own provision? Of course not.

¹ *Your Money Counts*, Howard Dayton, 8.

² *Money, Possessions, & Eternity*, Randy Alcorn, 17.

But God does teach us something very important with his emphasis upon money and possessions in the Bible – that is, our stewardship of our money is a stewardship of worship. **You handle your money the way you do, because of who and what you worship.** Let me say that again. You handle your money the way you do, because of who and what you worship.

Worship drives your financial stewardship, just like your worship motivates every other aspect of your life and relationships. Worship motivates your earning, spending, saving, and giving. **Your credit score is a reflection of your worship priorities.**

In other words, **an honest review of your financial records will expose your functional god.**

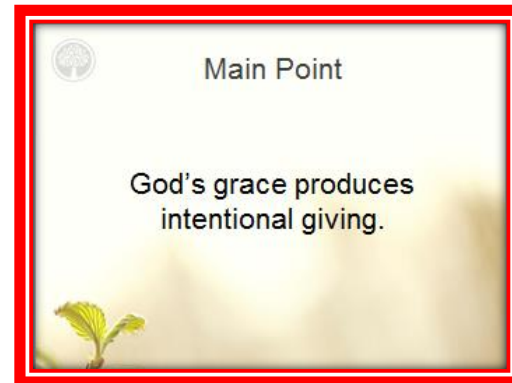
Jesus taught it this way, “*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*”³ He affirmed that no man can serve two masters.... “*You cannot serve God and money*”⁴. In **Luke 16:11** Christ even taught that “*if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true [spiritual] riches to you?*”

Now we could spend an 18-week series on all that God says about our financial stewardship, and still not exhaust God’s instruction on this practical aspect of our worship. So this morning, I want to just focus in on a very specific expression of our financial stewardship. Our giving. This morning we open our Bibles to 1

³ Matthew 6:21

⁴ Matthew 6:24

Corinthians 16 and there discover that **God’s grace produces intentional giving.**



Faithful stewards trust God’s provision as they worship Him in generous giving. Saved people share. Grace produces generosity.

Now some of you just checked out of this message. Because for you – no matter how much you might like the idea of being able to give to others – this idea seems about as far-fetched as being able to drive this tractor out of its miry predicament:



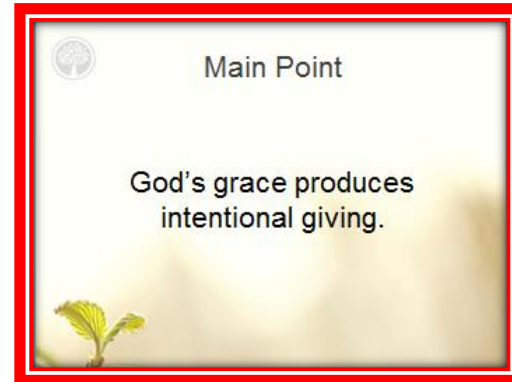
You're literally buried in bills, financial obligations, and debt. Any effort you've put into improving your financial situation just seems like you're spinning your wheels, and only sinking deeper into financial quicksand.

But church... this morning my prayer is to help you find the shovel that's been present in this photo all along.



I want to help you see that a grace-produced practice of giving is actually a great place to start when thinking about getting your financial house back in order. Sure it's

hard work. But if you can get your giving right – you'll get your worship right. And when you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, Jesus promises that all your other needs for food, clothing, and shelter will be provided for you.⁵



When God's grace is reigning in your heart, intentional giving towards others will be the result. Because what we learn from our text this morning is that **Giving is an act of worship (15:58-16:1).**

⁵ Matthew 6:31-33.



As we catch up to Paul in chapter 16 of 1 Corinthians, Paul here is answering another question from the Gentile believers in Corinth. This is the sixth time in the letter that he says, “Now concerning...” and introduces a new subject to his Corinthian readers. He now takes up the topic of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. He sees no conflict between the discussion of the collection of the saints and the resurrection which he just concluded.

Notice the end of chapter 15. Paul concludes this swelling crescendo of glorying in the Gospel of Christ, and he charges the Corinthians to “*therefore, [in light of these glorious truths of the believer’s victory in Christ] my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*”

In other words, Paul communicates that all giving is an act of worship. It is part of what it means to be *abounding in the work of the Lord*.

Since giving is an act of worship, this means God intends for our giving to be:



- Responsive
- Thankful, and
- Sacrificial

Truly all worship is responsive, thankful, and sacrificial, and the worship of giving should be no different.

So – if you give out of mere duty or obligation or legalistic guilt – it’s not worship. It’s just a mere transfer of funds. And according to **1 Cor 13:3** such giving gains nothing.⁶

But God’s grace produces intentional generosity. Because a natural response to receiving so much from God is to sincerely and sacrificially give it all back to Him!

⁶ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:3

Having received so much ourselves, our hearts respond in cheerful thanksgiving by sacrificially sharing our wealth with others!⁷

Now just a word on the sacrificial aspect of worship. Love is the proper and right motivation for all of our worship, but I would submit to you that where there is no sacrifice there is no love. This is true in marriage. And it's true in our personal worship of God. True love requires sacrifice. This is why King David refused to offer a burnt sacrifice to the Lord that cost him nothing.⁸ Love requires personal sacrifice.

So don't be deceived by cheap worship which costs you nothing. Be intentional to truly worship God in your giving. Know the joy of sacrificial worship – for the glories of Christ's resurrection compel us to abound in such God-glorifying love.

Now quickly, I want you to notice one more important truth from verse 1 of chapter 16 before we move to our next point. Notice these directions are to be universally applied,

As I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.

In other words, this worship of giving is expected in all the churches. This is not just something that was culturally specific to the Greek believers in Corinth. The

⁷ Proverbs 3:9.

⁸ 2 Samuel 24:24.

principles provided in this passage are to govern the collections for the saints for all time in God's church.

So giving God's way is an act of worship, and it is to be expected as a common element of worship for all God's churches through the world.

Next Paul teaches that **Giving represents your priorities** (16:2)



In many ways money represents us. How we earn, save, spend, and invest our money all represents us. Our money reveals our treasures. It's a medium of exchange, a means of transferring value. So it's only natural that our giving will honestly reflect what we treasure and value most.

God's grace generates intentional giving towards biblical priorities. And God's instructions for giving first prioritize the needs of our own families, then other's spiritual needs, and then other's physical needs.

If you looked back at your giving records, what have been your generosity priorities?

Let's see if this chart can help us better understand God's priorities for Christian generosity:



First Timothy 5:8 and 5:16 both teach that families have the first responsibility to care for their own family members, before the church is to be called. So if your extended family has a need, the first biblical priority for your giving is to help care for them.

This brings up an important side note regarding the right definition of financial stewardship. You see – sometimes in the church today stewardship just degenerates into “the protection of assets.” So people who are savers or who are “stingy and tight” feel real good about biblical stewardship. But that kind of attitude is more rooted in fear and control than worship and love.

The true definition of biblical stewardship is sacrificial generosity. And biblical generosity starts at

home. So if you're not being generous with those closest to you because you think God wants you to give it all away to others – you're missing the point.⁹ The biblical priority for generosity always starts at home – just like all other evidences of God's grace in our lives.

So after caring for the needs of our own extended family, **1 Tim 5:17** and **Gal 6:6** both teach the priority of supporting our spiritual leaders – those who preach and teach God's Gospel in our own local church.

Then **1 Corinthians 9** and **Philippians 4** teach the priorities of supporting the non-local work of proclaiming the Gospel around the world.

In short, funding spiritual needs are a higher biblical priority than funding physical needs.

But that is not an excuse for neglecting the physical needs of the Believers or Unbelievers...for there are many biblical commands for God's children to share with the poor. And our generosity towards those with real needs is a powerful testimony of God's transforming grace.

Now this is not a legalistic order – but it's a biblical priority that should be reflected in the big picture of our worship as giving. Because giving represents our priorities.

And verse 2 makes it pretty clear... intentional giving is going to be:

⁹ C.f. Mark 7:6-13.



- Regular
- Continuous, and
- Personal

Notice Paul says in verse 2,

On the first day of every week...

Their giving should be regular and continuous. He was not asking for a large one-time gift or collection; rather he was commending a practice of giving where each Christian would continually bring some gift every Sunday in order to store up for the upcoming need. It was good to remember the poor among the saints on a regular basis, and setting a portion aside each week made it easier to give a larger amount.

This is why we incorporate giving into our weekly worship gatherings here at New Castle Bible Church. We gather together to worship – to give ourselves entirely to God and celebrate all that He has given to us. And since the

treasure of our hearts is represented by our money, our regular worship together must include opportunities for us to sacrifice financially as well.

Note this isn't waiting until the end of the year and seeing how much I have left... and then determining how much I can afford to give away... but it's a regular and continuous priority of faith.

And notice...each person who is a part of the church is one who should be participating in this exercise of giving.

... each of you is to put something aside...

In other words... No worshipper should abstain from personally participating in a regular pattern of giving.¹⁰

And when the text speaks of putting the gifts aside... this is speaking of putting the gifts into a common treasury, and not in every one's individual home. So the prescribed place of the collection is the church, as a part of its weekly worship gatherings.

So... giving God's way is motivated by worship, occurs regularly and continuously, and reflects Gospel priorities.

But still you may say ... but where's the money going to come from? I'm already short on funds... how can I justify giving anything away right now?

¹⁰ I was so thankful to learn that there were 244 different giving units last year from NCBC. We only have 288 different families right now, so that means most of you are participating in some way in this spiritual grace. This is healthy and right, and God is to be thanked for His amazing grace!

And that brings us to the rest of verse 2, where we learn that **Giving reflects faith in God's provision (16:2)**



The phrase in verse 2 is...

As he may prosper...

Meaning that Paul intends that the amount of every week's gift be in direct proportion to each man's success for that week. Back in Greece, they got paid at the end of every day. Maybe you only get paid once a month. But the principle still applies...the amount of one's worship gift should be proportionate to the amount of profit God has provided.

The more God has blessed you, the more you give.

Note Paul is not soliciting a tithe. This collection is not an oppressive tax which requires rich and poor alike to give the same amount. The measure of God's blessing to the Corinthians is to be the measure of their return to Him.

This means that our giving should be



- Proportionate
- Expectant, and
- Joyful

Church – studies commonly demonstrate that people with higher incomes are significantly less generous as a percentage of what they earn. I saw one report years ago that reported families with an annual income of \$20K or less gave away over 10% of their income, but families making over \$100K only averaged giving of 2%. Why?

Because the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out our worship, and we live as if God prospers us to raise our standard of living, rather than our standard of giving.

The Macedonian Christians in 2 Corinthians 8:2 teach us that "giving is not a luxury of the rich, but the privilege of

the poor.”¹¹ Because when we worship God with our giving – we’re investing in the heavenly. We’re sending it on ahead. As Jim Elliot is credited for saying, “He is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Of course giving reflects faith in God’s provision. But all our money is God’s after all, right? It’s not like God only claims ownership of the percentage we determine to give away. No, Scripture is clear that God owns everything. We are just managing his funds. Do you live like that?

I still remember one day when someone of great financial means approached me with a checkbook, and said, Kevin – you are regularly interacting with people who have legitimate needs. I’ve set up this account at the bank, and you have authority to write checks of any amount from this account to sincerely help others. I trust you to be wise with how you invest this money. But be generous. And whenever you get low on funds, let’s get together. I’d love to hear how God is using this to encourage and provide for others, and I’ll make sure you have the funds you need.

Now if that was you, how would you respond?

I’ll be honest... At first I was a bit timid about it all. I didn’t want to make a mistake. But then I realized the tremendous joy of my position. I could pray, and God’s Spirit would help me to know how to best use these funds for His greater glory. That was a thrilling assignment!

¹¹ *The Treasure Principle*, Randy Alcorn, 30.

Wouldn’t you love to be given that opportunity?

Church – don’t miss this. You have. Everything that God has given you is His... but He’s given it to you to use it for His glory and eternal purposes.

As R. G. LeTourneau was fond of saying, “You can’t out-give God. I shovel it out, and God shovels it back, but God has a bigger shovel.”

So don’t live by a law or by duty... but intentionally pursue generosity according to all that God has entrusted to you.

Now there is some false teaching in some circles today that teach us to give what we do not have, or to actually give beyond our means. Sometimes this tradition teaches us to “plant a seed” and give money that we don’t have so that God will prosper us in return.

But loved ones, to give more than you have, or to put yourself in debt or to be unable to pay your bills is not what God wants from you. God desires for you to be generous according to what He has given you – not according to what you don’t have.

Finally, remember that your **Giving reflects spiritual trustworthiness (16:3-4).**



Jesus' words in Luke 16:10-13 are very clear:

"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. ¹¹ If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

In other words, faithful stewardship of money demonstrates that God can trust us to be faithful with true spiritual riches.

To say it another way – we must be intentional to make sure our financial giving is



- Prayerful
- Careful, and wise
- Investing

Notice how intentionally Paul approached this matter with the Corinthians.

He did not want there to be any collections for the Jerusalem saints while he was present with them. He wanted the collections done without any impropriety or perceived manipulation. Paul wanted the giving to be a private matter where he did not know who gave what.

Then in verses 3-4, Paul gives careful and specific instructions about how the collection would be handled and delivered.

He wanted the gift delivered by men who had proven their dependability. Paul himself would endorse them by letter. If possible, Paul may even accompany their delivery of the gift.

In the final analysis – he wanted to ensure the collected funds would safely reach their intended destination.

What can we learn from this today? God's grace produces intentional giving that is prayerful, careful, and strategic.

You don't need a pastor to tell you that there are many "wolves" in our world who selfishly prey upon the gullibility of Christians.

Pray about your giving, church. Plan out your regular giving. Like every other part of your spiritual worship, sacrificial generosity benefits from prayerful forethought and intentional planning. Most people who do not plan out their giving are surprised at the end of the year by how small of a percentage they have actually invested in eternal treasure.

After all, all giving is really an investment isn't it? That's why the discussion about biblical priorities is so relevant. Every club and special focus group in our nation greedily clamors for a piece of our generosity. And of course you can't give to everything. So pray, be intentional, and make wise investments with God's money. And then joyfully watch as He brings Himself glory by entrusting you with everlasting riches for all of eternity.

God's grace produces intentional giving. So let me ask you this morning,

Are you willing to **be intentional to worship God in generous giving this year?**



This is not a competition. And it's not about guilt or law. It's all about grace. And **God's grace produces intentional giving.**



Giving is an act of worship. Your giving represents who you are, and what you value. And of course, your giving is a demonstration of faith in God's provision. For your faithfulness with your earthly wealth reflects your trustworthiness for spiritual treasures as well.

God has grown my wife and me in so many ways in this aspect of our own worship.

When we moved to Los Angeles to attend seminary, it was because we were convinced God was calling us to get equipped in the areas of our gifts. But the cost of living in LA at the time was exorbitant. Our rent alone was \$1500/month. We had some savings that could float us for a while, but certainly not enough to get us through the 4 year program. We believed God would provide everything we needed to fulfill His calling in our lives...and so that's why we continued to financially share with our local church and others who had needs throughout our entire time in school. Literally we couldn't afford not to trust God through our giving.

Even today looking back on those four years, we marvel at the supernatural provision of God's grace to us. It never did add up on paper. There's no explanation for how we returned home after 4 years in LA without debt. None, except for God's grace. And having been such a recipient of God's grace, how could we not share it freely with others. For it is far more blessed to give, than to receive.¹²

Church – Jesus paid it all so you could be free. His sacrifice set you free from materialism. His sacrifice set you free from consumerism. His sacrifice set you free from fear, and He gave you a new heart and a new spirit of power, of love, and sound mind. Grace has made you new.

¹² Acts 20:35.

Do you personally know God's grace today?

If so, give God's way. He is worthy of your worship.



Let's pray. **Closing prayer.**

Closing Song – <<I Surrender All>>

Benediction

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

2 Corinthians 13:14