

# How To Build Up Your Church

*(1 Corinthians 16:1-24)*

Now, Paul moves from his discussion on a doctrinal matter—the resurrection of the dead—to very practical matters. Being Christians involves much more than what we believe; it also affects how we behave, which is essential for building up the local church. Therefore, this passage reveals **four** requirements for building up your church.

## Give proportionally (16:1-4)

Paul begins: *Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye (16:1)*. The Corinthians had apparently asked Paul in a letter, or perhaps through a messenger, about the *collection* he was gathering for the needy believers in Jerusalem. In response to this question, Paul writes that *upon the first day of the week*, each person should set aside a portion of his or her income, saving it up so it would already be collected when He arrives (16:2). When Paul arrives, he wants to teach the Gospel, not promote an offering.

Giving has always been part of worship. However, God doesn't want our money; He wants the love and obedience it represents. The proportion, not the amount, of our giving reveals a lot about us. How does Jesus express this fact in Luke 12:34?

When we worship the Lord, we are to give in proportion to how we prosper, or what we have received, rather than a flat rate. Only one proportion is specified in the Bible—the tithe. Through the prophet Malachi, God asks: *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? (Mal. 3:8a-d)*. What is God's answer (3:8e)?

In the New Testament, Jesus confirms the practice of tithing. He condemns the Pharisees, who tithed of everything, even worthless garden herbs, while neglecting more important things such as *judgment, mercy, and faith (Mt 23:23a-c)*. Then, our Lord says, *these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*.

Paul then tells the Corinthians that when he arrives, they will decide how to deliver the offering to Jerusalem (16:3-4).

To build up your church, **give proportionally** and ...

## **Treat church leaders respectfully (16:5-12)**

As Paul writes *1 Corinthians*, he is ending his three-year ministry in Ephesus, where he plans to stay until Pentecost because he has an open door of ministry there (16:7-9). After Pentecost, he plans to head north to *Macedonia*, in northern Greece, and then travel south to Corinth, northwest of Athens in southern Greece. He will probably spend the winter there (16:5-6). In the meantime, he is sending Timothy to teach the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:17).

So, he writes, when Timothy arrives, they are to *see that he may be with them without fear*, because he is doing the Lord's work, just as Paul is (16:10). This implies Timothy might have something to *fear* in Corinth and indicates serving in that church would be no picnic. Animosity among church members often spills over to church leaders. So, Paul writes: *Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren* (16:11). Evidently, Timothy's being relatively young causes some people to *despise him*, or treat him with contempt. Also, it appears Timothy tends to be intimidated by older believers. Therefore, what does Paul command him in 1 Timothy 4:12a?

Timothy was a young preacher who needed all the encouragement he could get. When I first started preaching, I know that my sermons were not the best but after the message every Sunday, those people came by as I stood at the back door and told me what a great job I was doing. They weren't being deceitful. They knew I was doing the best I could. Because of their encouragement, I have continued in ministry for over forty years. We all get discouraged, especially young pastors.

Paul writes that those who lead the affairs of the church are *worthy of double honor* (1 Tim. 5:17a). Then, what does he write in the rest of that verse?

To build up your church, **give proportionally, treat church leaders respectfully**, and ...

## **Do everything lovingly (16:13-18)**

Paul begins this section: *Watch ye*, which means to be alert. This requires that we *stand fast in the faith*. The idea is to not retreat from the truth. We must have a firm commitment to the Word of God and never cave in to culture. We must act *like men* and *be strong* (16:13). We must be courageous, mature adults, rather than acting like frightened, immature children. Only weak cowards give in to culture. However, we must not neglect what command in 16:14?

This keeps our firmness from becoming hard and rude. It also keeps us from becoming obnoxious. Love is the first and supreme fruit of the Holy Spirit. That's why it is first in the list of the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Next, Paul commends *the house of Stephanas* [Stef'-uh-nus], who were his first converts in *Achaia* [uh-kay'-yuh] (16:15a). Paul also personally baptized them (1:16). Achaia was a Roman province that made up the southern half of ancient Greece, of which Corinth was the capital.

Stephanas and his household *addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints* (16:15b). The word translated *addicted* (TASSO, tas-so), means to make a total commitment, completely devoted. The word translated *ministry* (DIAKONIA, dee-ak-on-ee'-ah), is the word from which we get the word “deacon,” which means “servant.” Paul exhorts his readers to submit to them and others who are devoted (16:16).

Stephanas has recently visited Paul in Ephesus with two other Corinthian brothers, *Achaicus* [uh-kay'-uh-kus] and *Fortunatus* [for-too-nay'-tus] (16:17). They probably delivered the letter containing the questions Paul answers in this epistle (7:1), as well as information about problems in the church.

During their visit, they also refresh Paul's spirit, or encourage him, as they have those in Corinth (16:18a-b). Therefore, what does Paul write about these three men in the last part of the verse (16:18c)?

In other words, we should show appreciation to all who faithfully and unselfishly serve the Lord.

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### **Don't forget to be friendly (16:19-24)**

Several churches in the Roman province of *Asia*, modern Turkey, have been established during Paul's ministry in Ephesus and send their greetings to the believers at Corinth (16:19a; Acts 19:10). Paul also sends greetings from *Aquila and Priscilla* and the church that meets in their home (16:19b). This couple followed Paul from Corinth to Ephesus to help in his ministry there (Acts 18:18-21). The early church met primarily in homes, not large church auditoriums. One of the greatest places you have for ministry is your home. When was the last time you invited someone from your church to come to your home so you can know them better or minister to them? This is simply obeying what command in 1 Peter 4:9?

The word translated *hospitality* (PHILOXENOS, fil-ox'-en-os) means “love of strangers.” It is the idea of lovingly receiving or entertaining guests. A great way to be hospitable is to invite people into your home for a meal. This is becoming a lost ministry.

All the believers in Ephesus and the surrounding churches also send their greetings to the Corinthians. Then, Paul writes, *Greet ye one another with an holy kiss* (16:20). This was the common greeting of the Middle East, like a warm handshake or holy hug is in the west. It means you should be friendly at church. Welcome new people. Don't sit alone; sit by someone you don't know and make them feel welcome. If you see a visitor, greet them before and after the service is over. Don't just greet, sit by, and talk to the same people every Sunday. That is being cliquish!

It is a sin not to be warm and friendly to everyone at church services, especially visitors. We should be motivated by what words of Jesus in Matthew 25:40c-d?

Paul usually dictated his letters to a scribe, or secretary, and wrote the final greeting in his own handwriting. It was Paul's way of adding a personal touch (2 Thess. 3:17). This is much like adding a handwritten P.S. (postscript) to a typewritten letter. Therefore, he writes, *The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand* (16:21). Then, Paul writes: *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, that person is to be Anathema* [uh-nath'-uh-ma], which means "eternally condemned" (16:22).

Paul is referring to false teachers, who are the most harshly condemned people in the Bible. In Galatians 1:8, what does Paul write about anyone, even an angel from heaven, preaching a different Gospel than his?

The word translated *accursed* is the same Greek word used in 1 Corinthians 16:22. The infiltration of false teachers in the church causes Paul to pray *Maranatha*, which means "Come, O Lord" (16:22b).

Paul ends this letter with the same prayer with which he began it (1:3): *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you* (16:23). The word *grace* (CHARIS, kar'-ece) means unmerited, or undeserved, favor. So, Paul is praying for God's unmerited favor, and the blessings that accompany it, to continue upon the Corinthians. Every blessing we have in life is the result of God's *grace*. The source of God's *grace* is the *Lord Jesus Christ*.

Finally, Paul sends his *love* to *all* who are *in Christ Jesus*. *Amen* (16:24). Paul had to write some very stern words to correct some of the confusion and abuses in the church at Corinth. However, he wrote every word as a loving friend. This is an example of what truth in Proverbs 27:6a?

A true *friend* always tells you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. A true *friend* will risk your wrath to protect you or to correct you when you are wrong.

To build up your church, **give proportionally, treat church leaders respectfully, do everything lovingly, and don't forget to be friendly.**