

Discovering God's Wisdom

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Lesson 21 1 Corinthians 16

Searching the Scriptures for hidden treasure

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162

As we come to the end of 1 Corinthians, we enter chapter 16 and feel as if it is almost anti-climactic. We have just left the heights of heaven, as we considered the resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of every believer, and chapter 16 brings us right back down to earth with the taking up of a collection! Alan Redpath says, "*A Christian is a man whose heart is in heaven but whose feet are on the ground.*" (I think we can safely say this of our beloved Paul!) He also gives his own wonderful perspective on chapter 16 as he says, "*This chapter is the crown of all the teaching of the Corinthian letter.*" We can sum up Paul's teaching to the Corinthians in this letter with these words, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

With the words, "*Now concerning...*", we are brought back to another topic that the Corinthians had addressed with Paul. Their question wasn't whether or not they were to take up a collection; it seems this had already been addressed at a previous time. This question seems to have dealt with the *way* in which the collection was to be taken.

1. For whom was the collection to be taken? v. 1
 - a. How does Romans 15:25-26 further designate who these people were?
 - b. Romans 15:27 goes on to explain *why* Paul felt it was important for the Corinthians to take up this collection. Why was this?
2. In Romans 15:26, we're given 2 areas involved in sending aid to the saints in Jerusalem. Who were they?
 - a. As Paul begins to give instructions for taking up the collection, who does he use as his example in directing them? 1 Corinthians 16:1
 - b. What do you learn about Paul and his heart as you consider what we have looked at so far?

3. Verse 2 is very clear in the NLT: “*On every Lord’s Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering. Don’t wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.*” Using this translation, answer the following questions:

- When were they to put this money aside? How does that apply to us today?
- In 3 words, who was to give?
- How were they to know what to give?
- Why do you think Paul didn’t want them to wait until he came to collect the money?
- From verses 3-4, why might Paul have wanted them to choose who would take the money to Jerusalem?

Making It Personal...

4. Paul’s instructions to Corinth are perfect for us to follow in our giving to the church today. Is there anything you learned in these verses that will change how you give?
5. 2 Corinthians 9:7-8 give the *heart* perspective of the giver. From these verses, share:
- *How a person is to give.* v. 7
 - *Why a person is able to give.* v. 8
- a. Have you had the right perspective? Share your thoughts.

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today’s passage in a couple of sentences.

Pearl of Great Price

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” Revelation 22:20 This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 16:5-9

We remember that Paul is on his third missionary journey. It is now near the end of his three year stay in Ephesus and only a few short years before he would be imprisoned in Jerusalem (ironically at the time and occasion of delivering the collection he had been taking up from the churches—Acts 21:15; 24:17). In the next verses, we will see what his tentative plans were at this time.

1. From these verses, describe Paul's intentions for visiting the Corinthians:
 - verse 5*
 - verse 6*
 - verse 7*
 - a. You may wish to look at a map of Paul's third missionary journey and see the path he did eventually take as he left Ephesus: he went through the area of Macedonia to Corinth and then back again through Macedonia and on to Jerusalem.
2. What was his immediate plan, according to verse 8?
 - a. See if you can remember what time of year Pentecost would be celebrated. From that thought, you can get an idea of the time period Paul planned on traveling through Macedonia to get to Corinth to spend the winter.
 - b. Why was it Paul's plan to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost? v. 9a
3. What had been the case regarding Paul's ministry to Ephesus, when he wanted to go there on his second missionary journey—was there an open door for him at that time? See Acts 16:6
 - a. Consider why Ephesus might have been shut off to Paul before this time. (You might think about the people in Ephesus, as well as Paul, himself.)
 - b. With the open door came—what? v. 9b
 - c. Is that a surprise? What was Paul's obvious reaction?

Making It Personal...

4. Have you experienced a time that a door for service was closed to you? (Maybe you are in such a time right now.) How did you react, and what did you do, when you realized the door was closed?

- a. What does Jesus say about *doors* in Revelation 3:7?
- b. Is there a wide door of effective service open to you just now? Are there many adversaries? How are you responding to this open door? How does Revelation 3:8 encourage you as you approach your *open door*?

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 16:10-24

As we studied the first half of this chapter, we were given the worldwide perspective of Paul, as many areas were brought into the picture—Galatia, Jerusalem, Macedonia, Achaia, and Ephesus. In the rest of the passage, which we will study today, *people* will be brought into the picture—as many of those who were ministering with Paul will be mentioned by name. Alan Redpath says that in this chapter *the whole church comes into view!*

1. Let's look at each of those mentioned by name in this chapter, and what Paul has to say about them.

Timothy—v. 10-11

- *What do you already know about Timothy?*
- *What does Paul say about him here?*

Apollos—v. 12

- *What do you already know about Apollos?*
- *What does Paul say about him here?*

The household of Stephanas—v. 15-16

- *What does Paul say about them here?*

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus—v. 17-18

- *What does Paul say about them here?*

2. From verses 19-20, who sends their greetings to the Corinthians?

- a. Look briefly at Revelation 1:4 and chapters 2-3 to see to whom the words, *the churches of Asia* may refer. (There were many churches started by Paul in the province of Asia.) List these here.
 - b. Share what you remember about Aquila and Priscilla.
 - c. Although Paul had probably dictated the majority of this letter to the Corinthians, how did he ensure to them that he was personally involved in the writing? v.21
3. Paul gives 2 final words of exhortation to the Corinthians as he finishes his letter to them. The first word is found in verses 13-14 and has 5 parts. List them here:

Paul's final thoughts are strong—as they should be! Think of the final words you would say to your children, as you went out the door and left them for a while. Might they be like these?

- a. The second word is actually a warning. What is it? v. 22

Paul finishes his letter with 3 words... The word, *Maranatha*, which means, *O Lord, come!* With a prayer for *grace*, (even as he had began the letter with this same prayer—see 1 Corinthians 1:3)—and with a final mention of his *love* for them, “*My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*”

Making It Personal...

As Paul considered the curse that would rest on any who didn't love Jesus, he finished with the word, *Maranatha—O Lord, come!*

4. What is your heart on the soon coming of our Lord? Do you want him to come quickly? Share your thoughts on this.
 - a. What are you doing to be ready? For inspiration and motivation, read the parable of the 10 virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.

“*Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him...So shall it be! Amen.*”
Revelation 1:7 NIV

Digging Deeper

- ❖ See if you can summarize, in a few sentences, the entire letter Paul has written to the Corinthians!

Fourth Day:

Deeper Discoveries

This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research.

Watch (16:13) *"Watch, stand fast in the faith..."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Matthew 24:42; Luke 12:37; Colossians 4:2

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Be strong (16:13) *"...Be brave, be strong."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:11; Psalm 31:24

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Fifth Day:

Heartsearch

Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.

Final Words

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

Paul’s final words to the believers in Corinth seem to be a summary of what he has written in his letter. He was very stern with them at times, but always for the purpose of helping them to mature in Christ. As he closes his letter, he does so assuring them of his love, and encouraging them to love others in return.

We have been the recipients of a great deal of spiritual wisdom and personal instruction. When received in the right spirit and applied in daily practice, the result will bring glory to God. Take these closing words from Paul to heart today, and watch to see what God will do in your life as you continue to look to Him!

1. ***You must watch (be on guard)***—constantly on the lookout for the enemy’s attacks to undermine the unity of the body of Christ and the order in the church. Look up the references below from 1 Corinthians and write a word or two to describe what you need to be on the lookout for...

1:10

3:18-21

5:1-8

14:40

15:12

a. What word of warning are you given in 1 Peter 5:8?

b. What word of encouragement do you find in 1 Thessalonians 5:6?

2. ***You must stand fast in the faith (stand true to what you believe).***
Can you say you have studied this year to show yourself approved? Are you absolutely sure of what you believe? According to the following verses, *in what* are you to stand firm?

1 Corinthians 15:1

Philippians 1:27

Philippians 4:1

3. ***You must be brave (courageous) and strong.***
It takes courage and strength to stand up for the truth, to stand against false teachers, to deal with sin in the congregation, and to correct the problems in the church.
 - a. Use 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 to explain how you can be strong in any situation you will ever face?

4. ***You must do all in love.***
The “all” Paul spoke about would include the things he wrote about: the quarrelling, divisiveness, lawsuits, church discipline, marital relationships, offenses, and the failure to edify the church. Had the believers followed the *way of love*, they would not have encountered the problems they were facing. These believers were blessed with all the gifts, but *love* is what they needed most.
 - a. What, according to John 13:34-35, is to be your standard for loving others?
 - b. Do you love in this way? What will the world realize if you love others as Christ loved you?

5. Personal: If you were a first-century Christian reading this letter for the first time, what do you think your impression would be? What overall effect has Paul’s letter had on your life this year?

Heartsearch: Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week’s study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

Sixth Day:

Laying Up Treasure

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God that I _____

I thank God for _____

I am asking God _____

Praise for answered prayer: _____

People/things I want to pray for this coming week: _____

Pearl of Great Price: _____

Notes