

Week 17, 1 Corinthians 16

Hook



Main Point: The universal body of believers should be characterized generosity, missions, love, and global cooperation.

Media: The film *Rocky* was ranked by American Movie Classics as being among the *Top 50 Movie Endings of All Time*. Play the following clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5-s4abeoak>) for your class members and break them into groups. Challenge the groups to develop a list of three movies that contain incredible closing scenes.

What does a great ending in a movie or a book require?

What do you hope to see in the closing words of 1 Corinthians?

If you were writing to a church with the problems of Corinth, what might you choose as final words?

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Book

Main Point: The universal body of believers should be characterized by generosity, missions, love and global cooperation.

Text Summary: After Paul's famous section on the Resurrection of Christ, chapter 16 reveals to the reader an emerging portrait of how the universal body of believers should now behave in response to this salvific miracle. Said another way, chapter 16 shows us what kind of community the church is supposed to be in light of the Resurrection.¹ Themes of monetary generosity, missional networks, genuine love, and multi-church cooperation in the Gospel characterize the early Christian movement emerging in and around Corinth. The themes revealed in this final chapter of Corinthians remain a remarkable model for how the global Church today should still function.

1 Corinthians 16:1–4 [Read]

Sub-Point: Money must be stewarded wisely and with purpose.

In chapter 16, Paul moves from the theological to the practical. Once again the apostle is answering a question raised by the Corinthians, this one regarding generous giving, specifically concerning the offering to those in Jerusalem. It seems that the church at Corinth had heard of the collection from the Galatian churches, the oldest of Paul's church plants.

The need in Jerusalem was great. The church was poverty-stricken, and Paul reveals in this section that all churches should not only *feel* compassionate concern for their struggling brothers and sisters, but also take *action* in their relief. Though the Jerusalem church is totally different than the church at Corinth, Paul still expects them to consider themselves united under the same Gospel and bound to one another's well-being.

Verses 2 provides helpful instructions for the Corinthians regarding their giving:

Giving should be systematic (v. 2). Paul desires the believers to give weekly on the "first day of every week," a phrase also used to denote the day Christ rose from the dead.² In contrast to Judaism, the Christians would have gathered on Sunday.

Every believer should be giving (v. 2). One's level of income does not determine his ability to give. Christians are called to give in proportion to their income (Acts 11:29). Some would be

¹ Um, Stephen T. [2015] *Preaching the Word Commentary: 1 Corinthians*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, p. 289.

² Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2216.

limited by their finances and others would be equipped to give in abundance due to their wealth. Whatever one's financial standing, the message was clear: God's people are to be giving people.

Immediately after instructing the Corinthians in their giving, Paul demonstrates great wisdom regarding his own dealings with money. In verses 3 and 4, the apostle instructs the church of Corinth to choose representatives to take their offering to Jerusalem. Although Paul might accompany them, his desire is to invite accountability and remove himself from the handling of money; the apostle intends to be above reproach.

What role does financial giving play in the spiritual growth of a believer?

Which (if any) of the church at Corinth's issues might be helped by a shared project (such as the saving and collecting of the gift to Jerusalem)?

Why is Paul insistent that everyone participate in the gift to Jerusalem?

How has God helped to create a giving heart in you? What disciplines have helped you in becoming a generous, consistent and joyful giver?

1 Corinthians 16:5–24 [Read]

Sub-Point: Christ is moving throughout the world.

Paul shifts from the topic of generosity to the subject of missional travel in verse 5–10. By revealing his travel plans publically, Paul is revealing his effective use of time management among the churches. He alludes to his thought on generosity in verses 6 and 11, only this time he does not desire the church to give for the purpose of poverty relief, but for the purpose of helping missionaries and pastors in their missional work among lost cities and fledgling churches. These Corinthians should not think that God is only moving among them; instead, they should see mission work outside of their city as a normal and expected. Paul expects them to be involved with the global growth of Christianity outside of their Corinthian world.³

Verses 10–20 reveal an emphasis on multi-church and multi-leader cooperation. In the span of just 11 verses, Paul mentions the names of seven people who come from different churches, with different roles, in different geographical areas, all who are willing to be shuffled around for whatever need has arisen in the spread of Christianity. His mention of these people makes a clear point: Being a member or leader in the church is not just a local experience, but requires

³ Vang, Preben [2014] *Teaching the Text Commentary Series: 1 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, p. 226–227.

cooperation between all leaders, churches, and even denominations.⁴ Kingdom expansion requires all believers to cooperate in love (v. 14) with one another and go wherever God commands. In doing so, the church reveals to the watching world that Christ has the power to unify ethnic groups, borders and continents, and that His household spans the entire world.⁵

Verses 21–22 wrap up the entire book of 1 Corinthians, as Paul asserts that he wrote the letter with his own hand. Letters in the time of Corinth—especially lengthy ones like this—would have been written by a scribe. Paul takes the time to assure the Corinthians that he wrote the letter himself, not to merely prove its authenticity, but more importantly to reveal his heartfelt affection for this church. Paul ends the letter with the use of covenantal language that reveals again his emphasis on genuine love (v. 22). His final greeting is signed with his customary concluding benediction, “the grace of the Lord Jesus,” and assures the Corinthians a last time of his unwavering love to all of them.⁶

Describe a time when you participated in missional work either locally or abroad. How did the trip/trips shape your perspective?

What mission projects does your Bible Fellowship plan to participate in, in the near future?

How does a local church go about building connections with other congregations? (Teacher note: for a list of congregations in the Prestonwood Network that your class can pray for and send encouraging messages to, visit <http://prestonwoodnetwork.org/networkchurches>).

⁴ Vang [2014] *Teaching the Text Commentary Series: 1 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, p. 227.

⁵ Vang [2014] *Teaching the Text Commentary Series: 1 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, p. 234–235.

⁶ Vang [2014] *Teaching the Text Commentary Series: 1 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, p. 232–233.

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Took



Main Point: The universal body of believers should be characterized by generosity, missions, love and global cooperation.

Discussion: Ask your class to reflect on the whole of their study of 1 Corinthians.

What new things did you learn about 1 Corinthians over the course of the semester?

What did the Lord teach you about Himself as you studied 1 Corinthians?

What new things did the Lord teach you about yourself as you studied 1 Corinthians?

Lesson Conclusion: The closing of 1 Corinthians carries themes from the beginning of 1 Corinthians: The local church is to be marked by love and solidarity of purpose. The Church is designed to be a network in which individual congregations support and encourage one another, recognizing that God desires that all should come to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Challenge

Become a giver. Giving is a wonderful way to help overcome a self-centered attitude. Paul challenged and expected that every member of the Corinthians congregation would be a *giving* member of the Corinthian congregation.

Let all that you do be done in love. A running theme throughout the book of 1 Corinthians has been a call to love. 1 Corinthians 13:1: *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.* Examine how you speak to people this week; prayerfully ask God to reveal your motivations.

Support and engage in missions. There are multiple opportunities both locally and abroad for your Bible Fellowship to become active in missions. For mission opportunities in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, visit <http://prestonwood.org/connect/missions-outreach/local-missions>. To explore national and international mission trips, visit <http://prestonwood.org/connect/missions-outreach/2017-mission-trips>.