

1 Corinthians 16:1-24: Will You Keep Growing?

Tommy Meador / General Adult

1 Corinthians / 1 Corinthians 16:1–24

Introduction

- https://www.huffpost.com/entry/falling-iguana-season-florida_n_677eab62e4b004ca51b594ee - Can you imagine having to be on the lookout for falling iguanas?
- Paul's final words to Corinth: Be alert! Be alert because you live in a dangerous world.
- You are not going to be an alert Christian if you are not a growing Christian. The problem in Corinth was a problem of spiritual growth. Paul called these believers arrogant and immature.
- In the final chapter, several challenges to the Corinthian believers as Paul talks about his travel plans and greets different people.
- At first glance, the letter seems to end anti-climatically; especially after [1 Corinthians 15](#). However, there's much in this final chapter to challenge us in our spiritual growth.
- As we end this letter, maybe you're convicted that your faith is a Corinthian faith - immature, arrogant, and self-seeking.
- In these closing words, three areas of our Christian lives that we all need to be challenge to grow in.

Grow in your generosity.

- Paul ends his letter by challenging the believers in Corinth to give generously.

- Paul just wrote about the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus gave His life and rose again so you can be given the Kingdom of God. Jesus is the greatest giver. Paul going to talk more about giving in [2 Corinthians 8-9](#). [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) - Jesus generosity is the motivation for our generosity. We give of our time, our talents, and our financial resources because of what Jesus has given for us.
- Specifically, Paul challenging believers to give to an offering to the church in Jerusalem. Paul must have expected a large gift from believers at Corinth because some from Corinth will go with him to Jerusalem to deliver the offering.
- Famine in Jerusalem. Believers struggling with little resources. Believers have a responsibility to help other believers. (We try to help each other here - benevolence. We try to help other churches - Family of Churches).
- Paul NOT talking about tithing - talking about a special offering that he elaborates on in [2 Corinthians 8-9](#). Tithing was under the law - a tenth of income - In NT - we're not commanded to tithe, but we are commanded to give generously. Right to assume that generous giving would exceed what the law required because of how generously Jesus has given to us.
- Giving is baseline obedience to the Lord. Giving shows that you are grateful to the Lord, and giving shows that you are compassionate about others. A healthy church doesn't simply store up money to for ministry that comforts us. We want to use our financial resources for the sake of the Gospel. (Building project investing in future, benevolence giving, open facility policy, giving away to church plants, family of churches, missions, etc.)
- The challenges about giving in these verses:
 - **Prioritize your giving.** The first day of the week - different time - no online giving, no mailing it in. Nothing wrong with those things, but let's not forget that giving is an act of worship.

- **Plan your giving.** “Set something aside.” How do you set aside? Do you “tip” God? Do you give at all? Or are you intentionally setting aside a portion of income for ministry? Ten percent a starting point - might mean an adjustment to your spending habits. My conviction is to give primarily to the local church because the church is God’s plan to reach the world.
- **Be proportional in your giving.** Why a giving percentage is probably more appropriate than a dollar amount - BUT - your giving should reflect your income. People who make more should give more. Basic math 10% of a \$100,000 income more than 10% of a \$50,000 income. Set a goal and get started.
- Just like with any other area where God is calling you to obey, you won’t regret being obedient to God. But, you will regret disobeying God.

Grow in your going.

- vs. 5-12 - Paul gives travel plans and talks about Timothy and Apollos.
- Paul wants to be with the believers at Corinth again. He wants to nurture his relationship with them. However, his plans would change several times ([2 Corinthians 1](#)). Regardless of changing plans, Paul’s desire was to go where the Spirit led him.
- Timothy also going just like Paul - He would go to Corinth. Could have been difficult for Timothy because of his association with Paul. Timothy was the letter deliverer. When the church at Corinth read the letter, they might have gotten mad at Timothy because of how firm Paul was. (Don’t shoot the messenger!)

- Apollos also going - not at the time Paul wanted him to, but Paul trusted that Apollos would return to the Corinth as he was led by the Lord.
- Paul, Timothy, and Apollos all understood the call on their lives was to go as the Spirit led them.
- The life of a follower of Jesus, whether you are in full-time ministry or not, is to live life open-handedly. Years ago, we sang a hymn, “Wherever, He Leads, I’ll Go.” We want you to grow in your going! A mark of a maturing Christian is a willingness to go.
- Right now, we have a young couple that we are in the application process with the International Mission Board. They’re going!
- Over the last three years, a number of families have left our church to strategically plant themselves at Northwood Berkeley or Northwood Wando Woods to help those churches live again (Alex Valdes and Lindsey Hayes have recently taken significant ministry positions. The Troys have served at both churches.)
- Two questions:
- **How do you know where/when to go?**
 - The Bible - (Not a holy hunch) - Bible might not specifically tell you WHERE to go, but does tell you to LIVE sent - that wherever you are you are on the mission of God.
 - Prayer - As you are in the Bible, and as you are praying, God will use Scripture passages to give you direction (e.g., a leading towards international missions, to be more intentional in your neighborhood.)
 - The Church - I see in you conversations.
 - Circumstances - Seems what has happened to Paul. He wants to come to Corinth, but he’s writing from Ephesus and going to stay

in Ephesus because of an open door of ministry. In NT - open door of ministry = Gospel opportunity. ([Acts 14:27](#), [2 Cor. 2:12](#), [Col. 4:3](#), [Rev. 3:8](#)) Sometimes you are able to look around and clearly see God at work and know that's where you need to be. (Henry Blackaby - "Look for where God is at work around you and then join him in it.")

- **How should you respond when you know where/when God is leading you?**

- Be real - Paul: "...yet many oppose me." Staying in Ephesus knowing it's going to be hard. God doesn't tend to give easy assignments. Every assignment God gives is challenging because you are serving Him in a broken, sinful world. Always expect opposition and spiritual warfare. Hard ministry doesn't mean that God is telling you to move on. Ministry to your family is hard. Ministry on your job is hard. Ministry in America is hard. Ministry in a different country is hard. Sometimes, ministry in the church is hard.
- Be discerning - Be discerning of God is at work in you and through you. Ask God, "What do you want from me today, where you have planted me?" knowing that God may open a door for a season (e.g., a job, four years in college, etc.) before He moves you on to another season of ministry. Or, God may give you a lifetime assignment - plant you in one place your entire life for Gospel ministry.
- Be wise - Ask God for wisdom to minister well - to best show love, to best share the Gospel, the best use the gifts that He has given you.

Grow in your grittiness.

- Paul ends the letter by encouraging the believers to recognize and honor people like the Stephanas family who served the saints. We need to encourage and honor those who serve well.
- Paul also reminds the church at Corinth of people like Aquila and Priscilla who love the church.
- Paul finishes the letter reminding us that a curse is on anyone who does not love the Lord, and Paul desires for Jesus to come quickly (vs. 22).
- BUT... vs 13 - a final challenge to a church that looked like the world. Over and over again we've been reminded that the church at Corinth looked far more like the culture around them than they were living out their calling to saturate their culture with the Gospel.
- To a struggling church, Paul challenges them to have some grit about them. Grit = determination, toughness. The church at Corinth lacked a gritty faith. Paul gives 5 imperatives to encourage them to have a gritty faith:
 - Be alert - Be alert to the spiritual war that's take place around you. There's a real enemy that wants to devour you, and you live in a culture that is trying to pull you away from your walk with the Lord. And... be alert/watchful for the return of Christ. He's returning soon. Are you ready?
 - Stand firm, act like men - In ESV, NASB, the phrase *act like men*. Paul talking to women as well in this passage, but he is saying there should be a masculine quality to our faith. Likely thinking of Roman soldiers who knew what it meant to be alert and hold their ground. If we know the world is coming after us, we need to dig in to our faith, and not be swayed.

- Be courageous - Take big steps of faith. Make the most of the life that God has given you. Don't be afraid to tell God, "yes" even if it cost you in this life.
- Be strong - Ultimately, be strong in the Lord. Know that strength to endure is ultimately found in a relationship with Christ.
- Can't help but think about [Joshua 1](#) when I read this verse. Maybe Paul had it in mind - Getting ready to take the Promised Land - God tells Joshua several times, "Be strong and courageous." Then, instead of giving Joshua a battle plan, he tells Joshua to meditate on His Word and obey it. God would fight the battle, Joshua simply needed to lead the people to be faithful to do what God says.
- Staying in God's Word and obeying Him - that's real courage, real strength. That's really standing firm. Husbands, dads, you need to hear that. Wives, moms, so do you. Young men, young women... The world will tell you that being courageous is living out your true self. God tells us that real courage is knowing His Word and living it.
- And... do it in love. We live a gritty faith because we love God and we love others, because we want others to experience the One who sent His Son to die for our sins and rise again for us.
- Two questions:
 - **What is the substance of your faith?** Many of us have a wimpy faith because we place our faith in platitudes more than we do the victorious Gospel of Jesus. Many want a Christianity that's more about self-improvement than overcoming sin, living on the mission of God, and making the victory of Jesus known.

- **How do you respond when your faith is tested?** The testing of your faith reveals the quality of your faith. If you constantly give in to temptation, what does that say about your faith? What does it say about your walk with the Lord? What does the way you handle struggles say about your faith?
- Real faith believes the Gospel. Real faith lives in the promises of the Gospel. Real faith lives for the Gospel.
- This morning, repent of a faith that is superficial, shallow, complacent, and ask God to give you a gritty faith - a faith that is strong and courageous. Make a renewed commitment to grow - grow in generosity, grow in your going, grow in your grittiness.
- The Gospel is powerful - the Good News that Jesus came to deliver us through sin and death by dying in our place and rising from the dead really does give you a new life. If you have ever believed, repent and turn to Him today.