

Playing Your Part in the Gospel: Planning, Giving, Going, Helping, and Hosting 1 Corinthians 16:1–11

In the Spring of 1993 . . . the Trustees of Southern Seminary elected R. Albert Mohler to become the president.

Today . . . many of you know Dr. Mohler through his books, his blog, or his daily podcast.

But in 1993, he was a fresh-faced, 33 year-old conservative president entering a school steeped in liberal teaching and immoral living.

In fact, for many of the faculty who knew him, he was a turn coat – As a student he once led a protest for women to serve as senior pastors, and now he was coming to return Southern Seminary to its Reformed evangelical roots.

You can imagine . . . it didn't take long for the firestorm to begin.

In his first chapel . . . he preached a message entitled, “**Don't Just Do Something: Stand There.**”

Invoking the spirit of Martin Luther, he called Southern Seminary to stand on the bedrock of biblical orthodoxy and to return its original confession of faith.

He called **professors** . . . some of whom openly questioned the bodily resurrection of Jesus . . . to teach the word of God as absolute truth.

He called **students** . . . to expect teaching that aligned with the *Abstract of Principles*, a Bible-believing, gospel-centered confession of faith.

This is what he said,

The *Abstract of Principles* represents a clarion call to start with conviction rather than mere action. It cries out, “**Don't just do something, stand there!**”

This reverses the conventional wisdom of the world, but it puts the emphasis rightly.

[Christians] are now much more feverishly concerned with doing than with believing and thus our [witness and our souls] are in jeopardy.

By the end of the day . . . Mohler had faculty in his office calling for his resignation.

And for the next decade . . . he would everyday contend for the faith **STANDING FIRMLY** on the Word of God . . . just as he called for in his first sermon.

By God's grace . . . the Lord sustained him, his family, and his vision.

And by 2003 . . . after most of the vocal opposition had left . . . Mohler was ready to preach another message about Standing and Doing.

And this time . . . he called it **Don't Just Stand There, Do Something!**

In this message . . . he reaffirmed his commitment to sound doctrine, saying

Any church [or] Christian organization that considers a confession of faith an imposition will eventually, inevitably abandon the gospel.

Indeed . . . if you look at the American church in the last twenty-five years, we have seen this – and thankfully . . . in response

. . . a growing number of churches have called for sound doctrine, biblical exposition, and 16-month studies of books like 1 Corinthians 16.

One of the reasons I love OBC is its heritage of unswerving commitment to truth.

But just like Southern Seminary, we who love truth and pursue theology must not make our studies doctrinal cul-de-sacs.

We must adorn our doctrine and share our Christ with others . . . → we must WORK to see others know the loving truth of the gospel.

As Mohler said, “We can get [our theology] all right and all wrong at the same time.”

“If you lack passion [for others], you do not understand theology.

“The Christian life and Christian discipleship . . . are marked by action, not by passivity;

AND “The New Testament is filled with action verbs . . . like . . . go, teach, witness, serve, tell, preach, lead, feed, clothe, instruct, fight, keep, rebuke, guard, retain, suffer, endure, . . .

Such actions words . . . call us who follow Christ to a life of strenuous effort and energy

Energy that comes from God's grace . . . from the resurrection of Christ himself . . .

And not surprisingly . . . it is this energy and action we find in 1 Corinthians 16, as Paul turns from theology to practice.

When we finished 1 Corinthians 15, we found Paul had funneled all of his teaching about resurrection into this single word of encouragement:

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.

Then . . . in our Bibles comes a change of chapters,
a subtitle like **The Collection for the Saints**
an assumption Paul has moved on from the resurrection.

And . . . to be fair . . . there is something to that.

16:1 begins . . . “Now concerning” . . . a verbal indicator he’s moving to a new subject

He’s already used this phrase four times to introduce various topics . . . And he’ll use it once more in v. 12.

These topical headings indicate various answers to questions Paul has received from the Corinthians.

And so 1 Corinthians 16:1 does start a new subject, as does 16:12.

But . . . that doesn’t mean that chapters 15 + 16 are entirely disconnected.

I would contend, 1 Cor 16 is what happens when we live according to 1 Cor 15.

A life of activity for the Lord is the result of being made alive in Christ

Like Mohler’s two messages . . . We must STAND firmly in the doctrines of grace ... and

We must DO all grace commands

Or as Paul says in 1 Cor 15:10: I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

What we will find in 1 Corinthians 16 . . . is a flurry activity that is not reserved for a few FT missionaries . . . it is a way of life for everyone who calls themselves Xian.

As a chapter ... we might call it – Learning to Play Your Part in God’s Gospel

For starters . . . Consider what we find in this chapter . . .

In vv 1–4 . . . Paul gives instructions to the Corinthians on giving.

Then vv 5–9 . . . He describes his missionary activity from Ephesus to Macedonia to Corinth

vv 10–11 . . . He gives instructions concerning Timothy and his movements

vv. 12–13 He gives instructions about Apollos and for the Corinthians

Then vv. 14–18 Paul commends the work of three other labors

Last vv. 19–24 Concludes with Paul and the church of Asia sending their greetings and exhortation to Corinth

So . . . the whole chapter is about work for the Lord.

But it is not just work for those who are FT missionaries.

The household of Stephanas (v. 15) and the household of Aquila and Priscilla (v. 19) describe two families who leveraged their homes and resources for the gospel.

Indeed, this is what every Christian should do – must believe the gospel . . . that Christ died in the place of sinners . . . and being saved by the gospel, we must share that good news with others.

This is how churches are founded . . . and flourish . . . when the gospel creates believers and those believers in turn share good news with others.

[And that is what this whole chapter is about . . .]

In ch. 16 . . . we see the kind of gospel-centered service we need to imitate.

And . . . even more . . . we see how churches serve other churches.

How churches . . . plan and scheme and strategize for the gospel

Thus in light of the resurrection of Christ, we find here a model for how we ought to plan our lives for the sake of Christ and his kingdom.

Indeed . . . this will be our focus today . . .

FIVE WAYS you can play your part in the Gospel . . .

To be more specific . . . there's 1 main point in these verses and 4 ways it applies

That is . . . with the life we have received in Christ . . . we must be proactive in our planning to GIVE, GO, HOST, and HELP

The PLANNING is the main point . . . giving, going, hosting, and helping are the 4 applications.

1. Those who have been made alive in Christ . . . **PLAN** how they can give life to others.

If you look at the chapter as a whole . . . the recurring theme is one of planning!

First in **v. 2** . . . Paul tells the Corinthians how to take up a collection.

He encourages them to plan for his arrival . . . not to take up a collection when he comes.

Then . . . in **vv. 3–4** he tells them this collection is for the church in Jerusalem.

Therefore, he needs them to think about who they will appoint to take the offering.

He says, “**when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit**” = those whom you examine/approve

Paul doesn’t make a generic call for volunteers, he calls the church to prayerfully consider who they will send. In other words, he calls them to plan.

Verses 5–11 continue to show Paul’s care in planning.

For instance, look at what he says in vv. 5–8. . . **READ**

In these four verses . . . we see **WHAT** his plans are . . . and **HOW** he orders his plans.

As to WHAT: He has set up his itinerary to move him from Ephesus through Macedonia to Corinth and then from there to Jerusalem or someplace else.

That is to say . . . he is not haphazard in his movements. But rather, he is staying in Ephesus “**because a wide door for effective work has opened.**”

He plans to travel through Macedonia, a place where before he has ministered.

Then he will return to Corinth, in order to spend ample time with them.

. . . From here, Paul says he is open to going to Jerusalem or his next port of ministry.

. . . From Act 19:20–21, we learn Paul is working to get to Rome.

In all Paul’s letters, we learn Paul is never haphazard in anything he does. Rather, he is extremely deliberate.

And his deliberateness comes from two commitments—two commitments that show us **HOW** we should make our plans.

The first commitment is his submission to the Lord's sovereign will.

You can see this in v. 7 – “I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.”

Whenever we talk about making plans, we must not forget James cautionary words against boasting in our future plans:

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”

¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (James 4:13–16)

So Paul makes plans, but in his heart he submits himself to the Lord. **So it must be with each of us.**

If you get a message from me and it closes w/ the letters DV... it's not b/c autocorrect changed my initials. It's b/c I am reminding myself, these plans are not ultimate.

DV stands for Deo Volente – or God Willing. And it's a practical way I remind myself all my plans must submit to God's.

It's something we must all preach to ourselves ... our plans are not ultimate. Because we are not ultimate. And thus we must pray and plan UNDER the God's sovereignty.

That's the first commitment . . . the second is to do everything for the sake of the Gospel.

So look at Paul . . . in v. 8–9 . . . he stays in Ephesus because ministry is going well . . .

In fact . . . he stays there even when there are many opponents.

Unlike modern comfort-seekers . . . Paul doesn't make his decision based on what feels easy . . . he makes his plans based on opportunities for the gospel.

He even interprets his enemies' opposition as proof that he needs to stay . . .

For him . . . everything is motivated by the gospel. And it should be for us.

If you are a follower of Christ, you should make every decision in light of the gospel.

Now sometimes, your decisions are made for you . . . if you are in the military this especially true . . . but in every day, in every job, in every choice with your free time . . .

You can either move towards gospel labor or away.

You can choose to look for ways to serve Christ . . . or you can look to make excuses for why you can't serve Christ.

Here's the honest truth . . . where we live . . . in Northern Virginia

the greatest threat to your faith is NOT a lack of freedom, but your abundance of freedom

Now . . . our culture is changing and Christian's freedoms are being erased, no question!

But for most of you . . . the greatest threat to your faith IS your freedom

We live in the most resource-rich country in the world, with endless entertainment factories clamoring for your time, money, and devotion

Every one of you lives next door to people living for their vices and their vacations . . .

And unless you make an intentional resurrection-empowered choice against culture. . . you will be pulled into the patterns and pleasures of this world!

This is why we take the Lord's Supper today . . . so that we remember who we are, who Christ is, and what the purpose of life is—**to worship and serve Christ, not self!**

Let me ask . . . Are you living in light of the gospel and the resurrection?

Are you passively letting life happen, chasing the lifestyle of others?
Or do you recognize + resist the status quo and plan your lifestyle differently?

How do you use your free time—1 of the most precious commodities in our area is time? Will you use spend it on yourself . . . or will you invest in the lives of others?

How do you use your money? Will you use your money to secure yourself in this age . . . or are you planning ways to turn that money into wings for the gospel?

How do you use your home? Will you use your residence as a place of retreat from the world . . . or might it become a place of refuge for others who need grace in their lives?

How do you use your strength? Do you daydream about the hobbies you'd like to pursue? Or do you dream about how you can use your passions to serve others?

We need to see how Paul's focus on planning resulted in concrete expressions of giving, going, hosting, and helping.

But as we contemplate the whole idea of planning for the gospel to advance, I want to make sure you don't misunderstand . . .

I'm not saying in addition to 70 hrs of work you should add 40 hrs of ministry . . .
That's not the NT way. I'm saying that in your 70 hours of work and 170 hours of housework . . . you do all things for the sake of advancing the gospel.

And I'm not saying . . . only those with great strength can serve God.

My grandmother who was confined to nursing home for the last 5 years of her life read Scripture, prayed, sent letters . . . until she died. . . . **the last phone call . .**

So . . . How will you use your life? Will you plink it away playing games, or will you **PLAN??**

If you will plan to serve others . . . here are four concrete ways you can do it!

[1] Those who have been made alive in Christ... GIVE to meet the needs of others.

As Randy Alcorn has pointed out in his excellent little book *The Treasure Principle* . . . There are hundreds of passages on money. This is one of them.

But if you look carefully, it is not about tithing or how much to give . . .

It is a call for making plans to give to the church in Jerusalem.

The church in Jerusalem was experiencing famine and economic hardship . . . and so Paul in many letters aims to bring them help through Gentile gifts.

It seems that Paul's concern is more than strict benevolence.

As he will argue in **2 Cor**, because the gospel came from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, the Gentiles have a debt to repay. So he urges them to give. And here Paul tells them how.

In brief . . . He says that on the **first day of the week** they should give.

This is the Lords' Day, the day when the church gathered for worship.

And thus the money would go to the church to hold this collection until P came.

Indirectly, Paul reinforces the truth there is no divide between sacred and secular. The money earned through honest work is pleasing to the Lord. And then generously giving that money to the Lord's work is doubly pleasing.

The second thing he says is that **each person is to give**. Giving to the work of the Lord is not the burden of a select few in the church. Every disciple of Christ is to give.

He says next **each is to put something aside and to store it up** . . . This seems to be a practical instruction, a way of planning to make sure that money is not lost over time. But it may also be call to dedicate this money as holy, setting it apart for God's purposes.

Last, he says they are to give **as they prosper**. In this he recognizes that some will make more than others, and those who make more are responsible to give more.

Or to say it differently . . . as the Lord prospers you, you should plan to give accordingly.

This is incredibly practical . . . and challenging!

ASK: Do you plan your giving ?? . . . Or do you just give what's left over?

In the OT . . . the Law taught to give the first-fruits to the Lord . . . that is, before the full harvest came in God's people were called upon to give in faith.

Faithless giving . . . comes from giving what's leftover and without any forethought?

Faithful giving . . . requires we make plans to give to the work of the Lord.

Books like the *Treasure Principle* lay out guidance for giving... and if you've never read what Scripture says on giving, you should make it a high priority.

For all of us . . . we must make plans with our money.

And thus . . . with keen awareness this world is passing away, let us make plans to increase the impact of Christ's resurrection . . . through GIVING . . .

That's the first way we make plans to advance the gospel . . .

[2] Those who have been made alive in Christ are constantly GOING to others

This is most easily seen in the travels of Paul mentioned in **vv. 5–9**

. . . and again in the travels of Timothy detailed **vv. 10–11**.

In these 7 verses, there are two words which repeat . . . *erchomai* which means **coming / going**, and *peuromai* which means **walking**.

In other words, the feel of this passage is one of action, activity, and movement. Paul is on the move. And indeed, everyone around Paul is on the move.

If you read the end of Paul's letters, you find he is like an aircraft carrier with gospel squadrons launching and landing all the time.

Indeed, this kind of movement should mark our lives too. Christians are not a sedentary people. We have message and a mission.

Therefore, we must be on the move! Even if we live in the same place all our lives!

When we see needs around us . . . we must not wait for others to move . . . we are called to action. We make disciples as we go . . . but we must GO looking to make disciples.

In Paul we see a man going from church to church – encouraging, edifying, discipling . . . This may be God's call on your life too . . . to leave this place and go overseas + Make D

It may also be God's call for you to postpone leaving this crazy city. He may want you to put down roots here . . . and be a hub of mercy to those here.

Wherever the Lord takes you . . . you are called to go—serving others and sharing X.

Which leads to two more concrete actions . . . the first is **OPENING your home to strangers** . . . and the other is **HELPING servants of the Lord advance the gospel**.

Both of these can be seen in vv 10–11.

In v. 10, Paul tells the church to plan for Timothy's arrival and to make his stay pleasant. He says, "**When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you . . . [and v. 11] let no one despise him.**"

The reason is found in this: "**FOR he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am.**"

Paul identifies Timothy's gospel ministry and calls the church to care for him.

Indeed, this should always be a part of a healthy church – a care for strangers and especially care for those who follow Christ.

At OBC . . .

It has been a great joy to see two families in our church take in Timothy Cox + his wife. It has been a marvel to watch another family welcome multiple strangers in their home.

Friends, this is the way of Christ . . . hospitality is a glorious ministry of grace. And we should continue to plan way to open our homes to others.

ATST . . . we should look for ways to advance the gospel by supporting gospel workers

In **v. 11** we see Paul charge the Corinthians with the task of helping Timothy . . . **READ**

Over the last two years, it has been a joy to have **Pete and Sharon McMillan** with us, to adopt **Gunnar** and his family as a church we support.

But we have also had **Tim Brister, David and Cindy Cox**, and the David and Yulia Beatty . . . these are all ministers of the gospel doing good work in Haiti, Brazil, Hungary.

It's been wonderful . . . to encourage them. But how much better if we could build partnerships with them and give financially to them.

Friends . . . this is what our church budget is for . . . we do not take in money to keep it for ourselves. We collect money each week for gospel labors.

We take up a weekly offering . . . so we can do gospel ministry here and abroad.

At present, we have a shortfall in our budget . . . and this after we have cut back in 2017. And the tragedy of that is that our ability to help others in gospel ministry is reduced.

It is my prayer that God would enlarge our hearts so that together we might give at OBC in a way that increases our missionary footprint . . . and enables to us to help

But that will only happen . . . as we plan to give, go, host, and help!

So brothers and sisters . . . take a long look at 1 Corinthians 16 . . .

Feel the wind of words . . . as the activities of the gospel leap from the page.

Prayerfully consider . . . how you might plan to be more active in the work of the Lord

What part will you play in the work of the gospel ??

How will you increase your planning, giving, going, hosting, and helping.

So that the effects of Christ's resurrection might be furthered.

And your joy in Christ might be amplified.