

## The opportunity in a church

When it comes to church operation, it is a team effort. (And it is so important that everyone in the church is on the same page, led by the Spirit of God.)

Paul started 1 Corinthians reminding the church at Corinth of this fact.

**1 Corinthians 2:10–16 (ESV)**<sup>10</sup> these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

<sup>14</sup> The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. <sup>15</sup> The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. <sup>16</sup> "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians is a letter to a church that had lost its way. **(In a city that was very much a place that people had lost their way.)**

- The people held people in higher regard than the scripture itself. **(Apollos vs Paul, even though Apollos was innocent in the matter.)**
- They were not growing as a Christian should.
- They had immorality in their church, and they approved of it. (temple of Aphrodite nearby)
- Outside/inside of the church are two different things, thus affecting even the health of the body.
- Certain members had favorites and excluded fellowship in class warfare.
- They needed reminding that serving each other is a part of the gifting of the Holy Spirit for churches. (Had to be walking in the Spirit for it to happen.)
- Needed reminding that church discipline was necessary to maintain church thrust.
- Taught them that love is service to each other and to God.
- Reminded them of who they were to be in Christ, and how it starts now and builds for eternity.

Now he concludes this letter with some church operational points.

1. **The church and money-** (1-4) Yes, I know, people think this is talked about too much!  
1 Corinthians 16:1–2 (ESV)

**16** Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

a.) Notice they were meeting on the first day of the week, and they took up collection. (Why do we do this, because this is the prescription given to NT churches)

b.) Paul stated that it was for each member. (Many worry about this, but you shouldn't because it is an offering to God for the church operation.)

2 Corinthians 9:6–7 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup>The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

- This is a principle that we should consider. (God knows our hearts and responds to them.)

c.) I think each of you would be shocked at the cost associated with church operation. (If there is good stewardship and accountability, it can benefit each member greatly.) And it is something that God notices.

d.) We certainly provide for missions, upkeep, etc. as a result.

e.) Most importantly, it is worship to God Himself! (Notice: “according to how God has prospered. For example, 10% for a very prosperous person can be painless whereas to someone who is not prosperous, can be a challenge to one’s faith.)

2. **Church ministry is opportunity to affect the world-** (It may sound grandiose, but it is true) (5-9)

a.) As much as anyone may plan, God is ultimately in control of that, which Paul acknowledges. (God’s plans were Paul’s plans.)

1 Corinthians 16:5–11 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup>I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, <sup>6</sup>and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup>For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup>But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup>for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

b.) “if the Lord permits”.

Proverbs 3:5–6 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.

<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.

c.) By his following God, the “large open door” was in Ephesus.

d.) My prayer is that AHBC is a “large open door” of ministry opportunity so we can make a major move of affecting the world for Christ from Midland, TX!

- As a church planter/missionary, look at Acts 14:27 when he reported back to his supporting church-

**Acts 14:27 (ESV)**<sup>27</sup> And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

- Following God's plan for open doors of faith requires spirit-led people!

3. **God needs people to serve for church ministry**- (We serve collectively!)

W. Wiersbe says that "money and opportunity are nothing without people to serve."

- **Timothy**- was a young man that Paul says in Philippians 2:22 that "he had proven character and served in the gospel ministry with Paul like a son to a father".

1 Corinthians 16:10–11 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup>When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. <sup>11</sup>So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.

1 Timothy 4:12–16 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup>Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. <sup>13</sup>Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. <sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. <sup>15</sup>Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. <sup>16</sup>Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. (**mission accomplished!**)

- **Apollos**- who is a person that was very instrumental with church advancement and didn't receive the fanfare that some of the people in the bible did.

(He was a spirit-filled man that received better training from Aquilla and Priscilla in Acts 18)

He was an instrumental leader at Corinth and elsewhere.

- **Stephanas and his household**- first converts in Achaia that obviously had been disciplined properly.

1 Corinthians 16:15–16 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup>Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— <sup>16</sup>be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.

(Notice- "**devoted to the work of the saints.**")

- **Fortunatus**- who accompanied Stephanas to Ephesus to check in with Paul about the church. (They wanted their church to be right with God.)
- **Aquila and Priscilla**- helped Paul at Corinth, made tents, assisted Paul at Ephesus, and it appears were planting a church in their home, helped disciple Apollos! (They were traveling to help Paul in many cases!)

And Paul lovingly closes his letter...

1 Corinthians 16:21–24 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup>I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. <sup>22</sup>If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! <sup>23</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup>My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.