

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (November 21, 2021)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

For the past three Sundays we have focused on the importance of Christian stewardship. Stewardship is defined as "How we take care of what we have." Everything we have has been given to us: the education we received, what we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, our health, our friendships and loves, the family we enjoy ... or don't, our talents and abilities, all of our stuff, our mind and memories, even time itself. 100% of what we have has been given to us by the One who created us ... and loves us.

If we forget that everything we have that's good is God given our life loses balance, our focus turns inward, our priorities get twisted, our relationships become commodities.

And so, as part of our Christian stewardship, we reflect, we think, we pray, we ask God for the strength and courage to let go of what will not last and take hold of what will. We ask God to help us live generously. Giving that is forced, or a response to guilt, adds nothing to our soul.

Intentional Christian stewardship helps us remember who we are and why we are. Christian stewardship helps keep our perspective clear and our priorities in order.

Today is Stewardship Dedication Sunday. Near the end of the service you will be invited to come forward and offer your financial commitment to God in support of our life together here at Grace. This morning's passage will offer practical steps on how we give. It's a personal decision. It's a faith decision. It's a community commitment. Here at Grace we seek to love and serve God and others as we live out our faith in Jesus together. Where is God leading us? Somewhere good. Somewhere exciting.

How We Give (SERMON PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

¹ Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ² 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. ³ And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. How many times, in the book of 1st Corinthians, is Paul responding to something he has heard, or a question he has

been asked, about or by the Corinthian Christians? Consider 1:11, 3:3-4, 4:17, 5:1, 6:4, 7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 10:25, 11:3, 11:17, 12:1, 15:1, 16:1.

2. What does "the collection for the saints" refer to? Read Galatians 2:9-10, Romans 15:25-28, and 2 Corinthians 9:13.
3. What will those carrying the financial gift to Jerusalem have with them? Why was it set up this way?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. Why should Christians in Corinth (and in Galatia) contribute to the needs of Christians in Jerusalem? Should we care about Christians in far off corners of the world? Why or why not?
5. What does Paul mean by, "on the first day of every week set something aside"? Why might this be important to those living in Corinth? What does this mean for us today?
6. What does Paul mean when he writes, "as you (he) may prosper"? Why is this important? Why doesn't Paul mention the "tithe"? Is the "tithe" still required of Christians today? Where did the concept of a "tithe" come from? (Deut. 14:22)

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. When did you first begin to offer some of what you had and earned back to God? Why did you do that? How did that make you feel?
8. What do you do currently in order to give regularly and generously? Is your giving easy or difficult? Explain.
9. Who is responsible for wisely using what you give to a church?
10. Looking back over your life has your motivation for giving changed?
11. What do you make of Paul's decision not to handle the contributions himself? Why did he make this decision?
12. What is your current plan for giving a portion of what you have back to God's work?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a moment or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to help you manage what you have well. Ask God to help you give sacrificially. Ask God to help you keep your priorities in order and not get too attached to your stuff. Ask God to help you be more generous. God love you and He will help you.