DISCUSSION GUIDE

BUILT DIFFERENT :

"A Disciple Is Generous, Courageous, and Loving"

SCRIPTURE | 1 Corinthians 16:1–24

MEMORY VERSE

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

MAIN IDEA OF THE TEXT

Built different: disciples live with sacrificial generosity.

DISCIPLESHIP RHYTHM

Sacrificial Generosity

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people to discuss the Observation and Interpretation questions.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 1: GIVING FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1–4. Paul gave the Corinthian church instructions about collecting money to support and bless the church in Jerusalem. Make a list of his instructions.

Suggested Response: Paul told each person to set aside money on the first day of every week. The amount should be "in keeping with your income," and the money should be prepared before Paul arrived. The Corinthians were also to choose approved representatives to carry the gift to Jerusalem. Paul said he would provide letters for them and might travel with them if appropriate.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 2: PLANS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND FELLOW WORKERS

Read 1 Corinthians 16:5–12. What did Paul say about his ministry plans? What did he say about how the Corinthian church should receive Timothy?

Suggested Response: Paul planned to travel through Macedonia and hoped to spend time with the Corinthians "if the Lord permits." For now, he would remain in Ephesus because "a great door for effective work" had opened even though there were many opponents. Paul told the Corinthians to receive Timothy without giving him reason to fear and to send him on his way in peace. Paul also said he strongly encouraged Apollos to visit Corinth, but Apollos was not willing to come at that time.

OBSERVATION EXERCISE 3: STAND FIRM, SERVE, AND LOVE

Read 1 Corinthians 16:13–24. What commands did Paul give as he closed the letter? What examples? What final greetings?

Suggested Response: Paul told the Corinthians to be on guard, stand firm in the faith, be courageous, be strong, and do everything in love. He pointed to the household of Stephanas, who devoted themselves to serving the Lord's people, and told the church to submit to people who worked and labored like them. He said Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus refreshed his spirit and deserved recognition. He closed with greetings from other believers, told them to greet one another with a holy kiss, warned anyone who did not love the Lord, prayed for the Lord to come, and ended with the grace of Jesus and his love for them in Christ.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 1: GENEROSITY IS INTENTIONAL

Why did Paul give the Corinthians specific instructions about the financial collection? He used ideas like giving regularly, proportionally, and in advance.

Suggested Response: Paul was teaching the Corinthians to make generosity a deliberate pattern rather than an emotional reaction to a need. "Each one" participates, but the amount was "in keeping with your income," so Paul expected different people to give according to what God had provided. Setting the money aside regularly also meant the gift would be ready when the need arose. Sacrificial generosity is not merely spontaneous. Disciples intentionally order their resources so they are prepared to use them for the good of others.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 2: PLANS BELONG TO THE LORD

Paul explained his ministry plans to the Corinthian church. What do we learn from Paul as he talked about his plans? How did he think about making plans and being open to God's direction?

Suggested Response: Paul planned carefully without assuming he controlled the future. He intended to visit Corinth but added "if the Lord permits." He also remained in Ephesus because there was fruitful work to do, even though that opportunity came with significant opposition. Timothy and Apollos had their own roles and schedules within the same mission. Paul's example shows that serving the Lord involves wise planning, flexibility, perseverance, and cooperation with others rather than controlling every circumstance or person.

INTERPRETATION EXERCISE 3: STRENGTH TAKES THE SHAPE OF LOVE AND SERVICE

In verses 13–18, Paul connected being courageous with loving and serving others. How are all three related? How does a disciple live out all three at the same time?

Suggested Response: Paul did not describe Christian strength as dominance or self-protection. He immediately commanded the Corinthians to "do everything in love" and then pointed to Stephanas and his household, who had devoted themselves to serving God's people, as examples. The people Paul told the church to recognize were not those who demanded status but those who labored for others. Christian courage stands firmly in the faith while strength expresses itself through love, service, generosity, and concern for the good of the church.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

QUESTION 1: This final chapter of 1 Corinthians touches on sacrificial giving, sacrificial serving, and sacrificial relationships with others. Which of these comes easiest for you? Why?

Suggested Response: Use this question to get your group discussing the chapter and what God is stirring in their heart. As your group responds, use follow-up questions to guide below surface-level responses. A good question to ask when someone responds is "Why?" or "Tell us more about …"

QUESTION 2: Paul said to regularly set aside money to bless the Jerusalem church. Do you have an intentional plan for financial generosity? What could you live without to increase your availability to give?

Suggested Response: I may tend to give only when someone asks, when I feel moved, or when I happen to have extra. I could begin setting aside a specific amount or percentage regularly, include generosity in my budget, or create financial margin so I am prepared to give when needs arise. The goal is not simply to give more in one moment but to build generosity into the way I manage what God provides.

As your group responds, use follow-up questions to guide below surface-level responses. Encourage transparent responses.

QUESTION 3: What things challenge your financial generosity right now?

Suggested Response: I may tell myself I will be generous when I earn more, pay something off, have more time, feel more secure, or reach a different stage of life. Those may be legitimate goals, but they can also become reasons to postpone generosity indefinitely. I can begin by asking what faithfulness looks like with the money, time, home, abilities, and opportunities God has already given me, today.

QUESTION 4: Paul loved and served the Ephesians even though he faced opposition. What life difficulties cause you to pull away from ministry opportunities? Tell us about a time this happened. What did you miss out on?

Suggested Response: I may be tempted to withdraw from serving, giving, discipling someone, repairing a relationship, or taking responsibility because it has become inconvenient or difficult. Difficulty does not automatically mean I am doing the wrong thing. I need wisdom to distinguish between a closed door and costly faithfulness.

QUESTION 5: Stephanas and his household "devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people." Where could you deliberately give more of yourself for the good of others?

Suggested Response: I may be able to give time, attention, hospitality, practical help, financial resources, encouragement, or consistent service. Devotion to service means more than occasionally helping when it fits easily into my schedule. I can identify one person or need and decide beforehand how I will serve rather than wait to see whether I feel like doing it.

QUESTION 6: What is one specific act of sacrificial generosity you can practice this week?

Suggested Response: I could give financially to a real need, increase regular giving to the church, provide a meal, help someone with an expense, open my home, invest several hours to serve someone, or use something I own for another person's benefit. The action should be specific enough that I know whether I followed through. Sacrificial generosity moves from agreeing that generosity is good to intentionally giving something God has placed in my hands.

QUESTION 7: How can our group help one another practice sacrificial generosity?

Suggested Response: We can talk honestly about needs, plan a serving opportunity together, encourage one another to take another step in giving intentionally, and make generosity something we practice as a community rather than only as individuals. We can also pay attention to needs within the group and ask how God may have already given us the resources, time, or abilities to meet them.