

SERIES: PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A HEALTHY & HOLY CHURCH:
A Study in 1 Corinthians Applied To The Church Today

IV. DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

(1 Cor. 16:1-24)

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INTRODUCTION:

Together, we have spent most of the past eight months examining biblical Prescriptions For A Healthy & Holy Church, as seen through the example of Paul's ministrations to the first century Corinthian Church. Extending on Paul's analogy of the Church as the Body of Christ, we have framed this study through the lens of The Great Physician giving the Body (Church) a thorough examination, identifying and prescribing medicine for all of it's ills. From here on out, then, the patient's healing and continued health will depend on the willingness and determination of the patient to fully accept and unfaithfully apply the Great Physician's prescriptions for cure and continuing care.

In such fashion Paul, as authorized and inspired by the Holy Spirit, concludes this prescription for spiritual health with a series of very practical final instructions. For me, these are much like the discharge instructions one receives when being released from the hospital after the initial, primary care (perhaps including surgery) has been administered.

PRAYER

- *Of course, health care being what it is, any discussion or discharge must begin with a reminder of the patient's responsibilities to pay for their care and/or that of their dependents.*

A.) CO-OP INSURANCE (vv. 1-4)

- The biblical expectation is that the Church of Christ will be taken care of through a co-op insurance group.
- Many of us have probably heard this term thrown around a bit during the current health care debate in our country, but have not necessarily heard it defined or described.
- Co-op is short for cooperative. A co-op group defers significantly from private insurance in that it is non-profit and provides few guarantees. An individual's special needs are provided for according to the sharing of fellow members of the co-operative group. It is dependent on it's members – not some corporate board or government agency – taking care of one another's needs.
- This, according to Scripture, is how it is to be in Christ's Church. More specifically it means:
 - 1.) **ALL Are Expected To Participate To Benefit Others (v. 1)**
 - All means all and that's all all means.
 - The goal and intent of each individual's participation is to be a blessing to others, and NOT to get a blessing or advantage for oneself.
 - 2.) **Contributions Are To Be Weekly & Self-motivated (v. 2)**
 - Though voluntary and individual, participation and membership in a co-operative group is a serious commitment to others.

- Simply participating and giving according to when one feels like it, thinks about it, finds it convenient, when it will help ensure personal benefit or satisfaction, etc. is diametrical opposed to the purpose and spirit of a co-operative.
- Rather, participation and giving needs to be a regular, weekly commitment without fail, excuse, or delay. Others are depending and counting on each one doing their part. If even one fails in this regard, the whole system and all who are in it are put in jeopardy!
- Yet, this commitment is one to be made and honored through personal motivation and integrity. There should be no need for solicitation, reminding, use of gimmicks, begging, or enforcing of this from the group or it's administration. It should, rather, be automatic on the part of each member.

3.) Giving Is To Be **Proportional** (v. 2)

- A participant's giving is similarly expected to be proportional to one's means and abilities.
- This is in contrast to an equal fixed amount from each. This way, ALL – poor and rich – can afford to participate and remain confident that their needs will be provided for regardless of their own personal means.
- The system is dependent on all giving generously according to their true means and abilities without regard for what others can or can't do.

4.) Giving Is To Be Received **Responsibly** (vv. 3-4)

- Finally, the giving is to be received by co-op administration in a responsible, accountable manner as stewards of what exists for others to God's glory!

- **Folks, in relation to the church, we are to function physically and spiritually as such a co-operative! Our effectiveness and ability to minister to all depends on it: Love & Generosity!**

- With the provisions taken care of, attention turns to . . .

B.) RULES FOR THE **JOURNEY** AHEAD (vv. 5-9)

1.) Set **Achievable, Short-range** Goals (v. 5)

- Plan and initiate living out and making the most of the life and health given to you!

2.) Remain **Flexible** (v. 6, 7)

- Plan carefully, but don't lose sight of the reality that not all will ever go just as planned.
- We must always be equally prepared to adjust and change our plans and goals according to circumstances and the Lord's leading.

3.) Move According To God's **Provision** (v. 6)

- As we do move forward, let us always do so according to God's provision; no more, no less.
- The phrase here, “*send me on my way*,” is in it's context a clear expectation for providing the means (food, money, traveling companions) to ensure a safe and successful journey.
- The implication is that Paul will go as far and minister as much as the church body provides for.

4.) **Expect The Unexpected (7-9)**

a.) **Obstacles**

b.) **Openings**

- Be on the lookout, expect and prepare for both throughout your journey.

+ Because of all of the above, it is then necessary that ALL contribute to the . . .

C.) **CARE AND FEEDING (vv. 10-12)**

Those who have been called out as full-time ministers need to be cared for and fed by the entire cooperative. Not only their sustenance, but their success depends on it! Therefore, regarding it's full-time ministers, the Church is responsible to:

1.) **Put At Ease**

- Make sure they feel and are made safe, secure and encouraged within the Body in order that they might have the wherewithal to courageously minister to those not yet in the Body.
- **A soldier who fears attack from behind will have a difficult time facing and marching ahead!**

2.) **Supply**

- There's that phrase again, "*Send him on his way,*" here with the additional qualifier "*in peace.*"
- It seems that, whether due to his relative youth, newness in this role, personality and/or relationships with others in the Church, they had not been properly equipping, accepting or encouraging Timothy and God's call on his life. Paul seeks to be sure this is corrected – for it is not only the right thing to do, but it is what is most beneficial to the whole Body!

3.) **Provide Advice With Choice**

- Here, Paul gives strong advice to Apollos in his ministry. Yet, even the apostle Paul ultimately respected and left the choice to Apollos how to respond; whether or not to follow the advice.
- He advised, but he didn't impose.
- And, when his advice was not taken, he continued to support Apollos and give him the benefit of the doubt as a minister of the gospel rather than take the easy low road of criticism or condemnation.

D.) **STRONG LOVE (vv. 13-14)**

- ALL of these things are to be done in love. The kind of love we read about already in Chapter 13.
- It is this foundation of a genuine motive and commitment to love that enables all to . . .
- "***Be alert,***" - always looking out and prepared for those who would subvert the ministry and pervert the gospel, *whether from without or from within the Body.*
- "***stand firm in the faith,***" - Trust absolutely in Christ and His Word. Stand firm not on your own understanding, the silvery, slippery tongues of others, or your emotions – but in your faith in His Word!
- "***be brave and strong.***" - Many will not only try to tempt you away from such, but will mock you and consider you weak and foolish for not believing or doing different or more than what is asked of you in Scripture or led through God's anointed. Many will try to convince you that to be brave and strong means to be your own person, question everything, follow and trust nobody.

True courage and strength, however, is alertly standing firm in submission to Christ, His Word and His anointed.

- **Once again, we see that Loving God Absolutely and Loving Others Sacrificially is the key to everything!**
- **“your every [action] must be done with love.”** Contextually, the allusion to “every action” or “all things” is a direct reminder of all that has previously been addressed in this letter: choosing and following your leaders, adhering to the doctrine of Scripture, growing in spiritual maturity, addressing sin, attitude in everything, responding to challenges to sacrifice, exercise of personal freedoms, public worship, exercise of spiritual gifts, and living in Christ's victory.

E.) HONOR YOUR CARETAKERS (vv. 15-20)

- On this reminder about the foundation of love, Scripture returns to the practical and important ways in which the Body is to honor those who care for it.
- Such honor, begins with willful and trusting submission.
- It continues with their being privately and publicly recognized for their service.
- It is ultimately consummated through reconciliation and expression of personal love.

F.) REMEMBER THE PERSONAL TOUCH (vv. 21-24)

- In concluding his letter, Paul re-emphasizes how much all that has been addressed is a deep, personal concern from himself unto his brothers and sisters in Corinth.
- He then makes it clear that it needs to go both ways. As Fee explains:

“If anyone does not love the Lord.’ That covers the whole letter. To insist on human wisdom over against the gospel of the Crucified One is to ‘not love the Lord’; so with living in incest, attendance at idol feasts, and so forth. The ultimate issue for Paul, therefore, is not their obedience to his word, but their love, or lack thereof, for the Lord himself. Failure to obey him is lack of love for him; to reject him in this way is to place oneself under the anathema (curse).” (pg. 838)

PUTTING IT TOGETHER:

So, here we are – Perth Bible Church in 2009. We have received the Great Physician's Prescriptions For A Healthy & Holy Church. We have been discharged to go out and fulfill our lives' purpose.

From here on out, then, our healing and continued health will depend on our willingness and determination to fully accept and unfailingly apply the Great Physician's prescriptions for cure and continuing care. **Will we?**

Let us all be every watchful, faithful, and living in Love!