

# 'THE LEADER'S FLEXIBILITY'

**Text:** I Corinthians 16:5-12

**Subject:** How Flexibility Increases Your Impact For God

## Introduction

- The Corinthians had questioned Paul about the collection he was receiving for the poor saints in Jerusalem.
- Paul answers their questions and closes his letter by informing the church of two things:  
#1. His travel plans and #2. The plans of his associates.

### **In Verses. 1-4 Practical Insights About Giving Are:**

1. Giving is an act of **worship**.
  - Every believer is to gather on the Lord's Day prepared to give their share to the resurrected Lord.
2. Giving is to be **systematic**.
  - Every believer is to set aside his offering at home during the week and bring it in to the assembly on the first day.
3. Giving is **personal** and individual.
  - Every member (rich or poor) is expected to give and help those in need. No one is exempt from participation.
4. Giving is to be **proportionate** in nature.
  - "As God has prospered him." V. 2 means that those who have more should give more.
5. Giving is to be handled with **integrity**.
  - Paul encouraged the giving churches to select dependable people to manage the offerings and carry them safely to Jerusalem.

### **What Does A Healthy (Flexible) Leader Look Like?**

1. Healthy Leader's are **Forward** Looking In Their Daily Routine. (Verse 5)  
"Now **I will come unto you** when I shall pass through Macedonia." (V. 5)

**Question:** What is Paul doing when he says this?

**Answer:** He is involved in ministry and seeing great results in Ephesus.

- Paul is right where God wants him, but he knows people need God in Corinth and Macedonia.
- Paul has a sense of purpose beyond his present daily routine.
- Paul isn't ignoring Ephesus at all; he's just not obsessed with his past or present successes.

### **Why Not?**

- Because Paul is looking forward to seeing God bring healing and maturity to a very needy church in Corinth.

## Application

- It is never God's will that we live in the successes or regrets of the past, but instead, look **ahead** to what God has in store!
- As Paul had a vision of what God would do in Corinth, so vision compels us as well to be forward looking.

**Question:** What is vision?

**Answer:** Vision is a picture of the **future** that produces passion in us **today**.

**Question:** What will vision do?

**Answer:** Vision charts the **course**, creates **energy** in those on board and causes us to be intentional in our plans.

**Fact:** Vision without a **strategy** is a little more than a **daydream**!

## 2. Healthy Leaders Are **Flexible** With Their Plans And Future Expectations. (Verses 6 & 7)

*"Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter...I hope to spend some time with you **if the Lord permits**."* (Verses 6 & 7)

- Paul is making travel plans to Corinth,
- Yet Paul in his planning knows something; that God could intervene and make changes at anytime!

**Question:** Is it scriptural to make detailed plans for the future?

**Answer:** Of course it is. (Paul was planning to stay well into the spring in Ephesus, travel through the summer in Macedonia (16:5) and then spend the winter in Corinth. (16:6)

### What's The Lesson?

- Make your plans for sure, but make them with a degree of flexibility in case God **changes** your schedule or calendar!

### And Remember These Three Truths:

1. Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be **broken**!
2. Be **rigid** enough to know where you are going, but **flexible** enough for God to change it at anytime!
3. Instead of bending other people out of shape, bend a little **yourself**!

### Illustration:

- Wings on a plane go up and down.
- Bridges where 18 wheelers travel over bend.
- Tall buildings sway in the wind.

### "If The Lord Will" Means:

- ◆ I have no will of my own, and
- ◆ God's agenda is what I live for!

## 3. Healthy Leaders Are **Fruitful** In Their Philosophy Of Ministry. (Verse 7)

*"I do not want to see you now and make **only a passing visit**; I hope to spend some time with you."* (Verse 7)

**Question:** What is Paul saying here?

**Answer:** He is telling the Corinthians that he wants **fruit** (not just **activity**) in ministry.

- Paul wants to see a deep work of grace.
- Paul knows there's a mess in Corinth.
- Paul is sure that two songs and a sermon won't fix the problems at hand.

#### **In Plain Vanilla**

- Paul's desire is for a deep and **lasting** effect.
- Paul wants to see health and maturity and lasting **fruit**,
- Paul wants nothing superficial or **shallow**.
- Paul wants to spend some **quality time** (without rushing) with these believers.

#### **Why This Mindset?**

- Because God has ordained that we not just be busy, but fruitful in developing healthy and mature people.

#### **Remember:**

- Spinning wheels is **directionless motion!**

#### **4. Healthy Leaders Are Faithful In Their Present Location (verses 8 & 9)**

*"I will **stay on at Ephesus** until Pentecost because there is a great door for effective work to preach and teach here."* (Verses 8 & 9)

- Paul is forward looking (as far as purpose is concerned for his life).
- But Paul is "staying on at Ephesus" and giving his all where he is as well.

#### **Sure He Has Visions For Success In Corinth And Macedonia**

- But as long as he's in Ephesus, it's 110%!
- He can't live in the **future** or he'll lose the effect of the **present**.
- Paul is going to flat out be faithful every day that God has him where he is, in Ephesus.

#### **What's The Lesson?**

1. To **seize** the opportunities where you are and live as if it's the last place on earth you will ever serve!
2. To ditch the mindset of the "**greener grass**" syndrome.
3. To get **planted** and give it our all wherever God has put us!

#### **And Remember**

- Your present **field** may be limited, but **you** are not limited by your present field!

#### **5. Healthy Leaders Are Firm In Their Painful Oppositions. (Verse 9)**

*"I will stay here in Ephesus, even though there are **many who oppose me**."* (Verse 9)

### Remember Now...

- Paul is describing his three years at Ephesus (Acts 19)
- He dialogued daily in a public lecture room (the Hall of Tyrannus) which he used during the midday siesta period (11am – 4pm) and the Word grew and multiplied mightily in Ephesus. (Acts 19:20)
- But Paul met bitter opposition and plots of destruction from the Jews. (Acts 20:17)

### Paul said he fought with “wild beasts at Ephesus” – Acts 20:18, 19 (Paul’s three beasts)

1. Paul encountered occult forces that ended in victory and a public bonfire where the books of magic were consigned to the flames.
2. Paul encountered a public outcry and was dragged into the local amphitheatre (and nearly lynched) because Demetrius’ business interests were being devastated. Ephesians in large numbers turned from idolatry to serve God, affecting the lucrative trade of making silver statues for the worship of Artemis.
3. Paul encountered opposition in Ephesus from the Jewish hierarchy, representing the religious establishment of the day.

### What’s The lesson?

- That the presence of opposition doesn’t mean that you have moved outside of the will of God.
- Paul doesn’t run from tension in Ephesus, he embraces it in a melting pot of wealth and wickedness.

### For You And Me?

**(Let’s respond to our opposition and adversaries the spiritual way, and remember:)**

1. No provocation ever **justifies** an unchristian response.
2. Unforgiveness is the **poison** we drink while we wait for the other person to die.
3. An enemy in the **heart** is worse than 10,000 in the **field**.
4. Our offenses will either be a **tombstone** or a **stepping stone** (It’s our choice)
5. Forgiveness is the **cancellation** of a debt as if it never existed.
6. The only part of me that can be offended is that part of me which has not **died**.
7. When you go through a tough time, be sure to pray this way:

**“Lord, callous my knees and not my heart.”**

**6. Healthy Leaders Are Focused On A Team Mentality. (Verses 10, 11)**

*“When Timothy comes to you, make him feel at home, for **he is doing the Lord’s work just as I am.**” (Verse 10)*

### **I love this about Paul:**

- He believes in team ministry and in the plurality of leadership.

### **In fact, he says here:**

“I could come and address your problems, but I’m sending Timothy because he can do what I can do.”

### **In other words:**

“Your success does not depend solely upon my ability.”

### **This was a shared ministry.**

- Paul refuses to present himself as God’s only faithful messenger
- Paul mentions five others; Timothy, Apollos, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, who served the Corinthians and Paul.
- Paul was eager to mentor Timothy and ask for the help of others.
- Paul so wanted Timothy to succeed and not be mistreated upon reaching Corinth.

### **The lesson is clear.**

- That God gets no glory over **ego-centered** leaders who are lone rangers.
- That God gets no glory over leaders who can’t get along with **people**.
- That God gets no glory when leaders fail to equip, encourage, enlist, train and **release** those along side of them.

**“We were born to reproduce after Christ’s kind.” (Leon Miles)**

## **7. Healthy Leaders Are Free From Control And Manipulation (Verse 12)**

*“I strongly urged Apollos to visit you, but **he was quite unwilling to go now.**” (Verse 12)*

### **Imagine This:**

- Paul asks Apollos to go to Corinth and Apollos says a flat out “No”.
- Paul sent Timothy but could only “strongly urge” Apollos. Apollos refused to go at this time.

**Question:** How does Paul respond to Apollos?

**Answer:** He refuses to push, intimidate or manipulate his fellow worker!

- He refuses to prophesy over him!
- He refuses to reject him and cut him off.
- He refuses to cop an attitude because he doesn’t get his own way.

### **Simply**

- Apollos says, “I won’t go” and Paul says, “I respect your decision.”

“When some people lose their office, their job, or their title, they feel like they’ve lost everything. Why? Because they are no longer in a position to exercise power over others.” (Richard W. Dortch, pg. 53, “Fatal Conceit.”)

## What's The Lesson?

1. To live free from **insecurity** and **control** that is easily offended and has to have its own way.
2. To respect where other people are in **God** and never take it **personal** when someone says "No".
3. To "**Thank God**" for the strong gifts He has placed around your life. (Apollos was a great preacher and well respected in Corinth, yet Paul stayed freed from **jealousy** and **envy**.)

### Remember:

- Had Paul been jealous, he would have kept Apollos out of Corinth as long as he could and treated him as a rival.

### Instead Paul Says:

- "As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the bretheren."

### Paul's Conclusion

In verse 13, "*Be watchful, stay true, be courageous and be strong.*"

In verse 14, "*Whatever you do, do it with kindness and love.*"

In verse 15, "*Remember Stephanas and his family who have devoted themselves to serve the saints.*"

In verse 16, "*Submit yourselves and follow their instructions.*"

In verse 17, "*I was glad to see Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus because they have helped me.*"

In verse 18, "*Recognize these faithful workers.*"

### A Warm Goodbye (Salutation)

In verse 19, "*Everyone in Asia sends their greetings.*"

In verse 20, "*Everyone asks me to say hello to you.*"

In verse 21-24, "*A curse be upon those who do not love Jesus; come Lord Jesus, the favor of God rests upon you all, my love to all of you, Amen.*"

**Fact:** Paul acknowledged the three messengers sent by the Corinthian church to Paul (Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus).

**Fact:** Paul says three incredible things about them.

1. They were **faithful in their service** and went beyond what was ever expected.
2. They **refreshed Paul's spirit** upon their arrival.
3. They served as **shining examples** of what believers should be.

**"Lord help us to do the same in the ministry we are stewards of, Amen!"**

## Lord Cement These Life Applications In Our Heart:

- #1. A healthy leader is **forward looking**. (Not living without a vision for the future.)
- #2. A healthy leader is **flexible** in their plans. (Not so rigid in their thinking that they get angry when God interrupts them.)
- #3. A healthy leader is **fruitful** in their ministry. (Not shallow or superficial, but wanting a deep work of grace.)
- #4. A healthy leader is **faithful** in their present location. (Not looking for a "better" place to serve down the road.)
- #5. A healthy leader is **firm** in their oppositions. (Not detoured by misunderstanding or rejection.)
- #6. A healthy leader is **focused** on the team. (Not flying solo and building everything around themselves.)
- #7. A healthy leader is **free** from control. (Not pushy or intimidating to get their own way.)

AMEN!  
Bill Kirk