INTRODUCTION TO STEWARDSHIP:

Our church is preparing for one of our greatest opportunities ever! We're getting ready to push forward with a capital campaign that will truly advance us both spiritually and for ministerial purposes. In preparation, we want to find out just what the Bible's instructs for this case. *1 Corinthians 16:1-4* is one of the Bible's clearest examples of a stewardship endeavor in a local church such as yours, delineating the plan to raise and set aside resources for a special opportunity. Stewardship: derived from "steward" who, in biblical terms, managed the assets of another. A wealthy man, for example, would turn his business affairs over to a steward who then managed them in the owner's name. God is the sole owner of all of heaven and earth. Furthermore, when we make Christ our Lord and Savior, we relinquish to Him all we are and have, thereby becoming stewards of God's possessions with which He has been so kind to provide us.

STUDY BACKGROUND:

From the early days of his ministry, the Apostle Paul displayed a concern for taking special offerings for important projects, such as we're getting ready to do as a church. On this third mission journey (which begins in *Acts 18:23*), Paul was not only concerned about planting new churches and strengthening the existing ones. He wanted to organize a massive fundraising effort to generate a collection from the Gentile churches, especially in Macedonia (Northern Greece) and Achaia (Southern Greece) for the church in Jerusalem which was suffering extreme poverty.

Why were the churches in Judea in dire straits?

- During the enthusiastic days immediately following Pentecost, many of the Christians liquidated most of their assets and shared all things in common. *Acts 4:32-37*
- The extreme persecutions faced by the Christians in Judea must have presented a difficult economic situation for the believers. *Acts 8:1*
- The famine referred to in the book of Acts perhaps extended over several years. *Acts 11:27-30*

© Impact Stewardship

Paul was concerned about the needs of the Judean Christians and wanted to help them, but he had another motive as well. There was great tension in these days between the Jewish Church in Judea and the Gentile Church that was spreading throughout the world. He must have felt that a gift from the Greek Christians to the Jewish Church would go a long way toward lessening tension and promoting healing and unity. *Romans 15:23-29*

As Paul visited his churches in Asia Minor and Europe, he not only evangelized and taught; he also promoted a year-long endeavor to raise these funds.

What lessons can we learn here that may help us in our own capital stewardship endeavors?

- Everyone should be included.
- Each person should give in direct proportion to their income. Paul's concern was not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice.
- When we break down a gift and give it systematically and incrementally over a period of time, each installment becomes an act of worship as we place it in the offering plate week-by-week on the Lord's Day.
- When we all work together, the job gets done. Having the resources available when needed frees us to minister more effectively and expeditiously.
- The plan should be well-administered and marked by integrity. In other words, we should have in place a plan and a system of accountability for the purpose of handling and dispersing the funds.

SUPPLEMENTAL READING:

Deuteronomy 16:10, 17
Ezra 2:69
Acts 11:29
2 Corinthians 8:3

© Impact Stewardship