



## Final Words

### RECAP

**This week's focus: "Be on your guard and do everything in love."**

Paul's letter to the church in Corinth is a clear voice speaking in the middle of chaos. We have seen over and over that this brand-new church was in turmoil. There were factions and divisions, misunderstandings about sexuality, confusion in their worship services and some, even questioned the resurrection of Jesus. Division and confusion began to undermine the work of God in their lives.

He elevates the Gospel above all their problems, issues and divisions. Throughout the book, the Gospel is like a beacon of light in the middle of a storm. The theme of 1 Corinthians is that in the middle of chaos, the Gospel of Jesus gives you clarity. He wants us to know that when we apply the Gospel to whatever is broken in our lives we will find healing and restoration.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians is divided into five major sections, based on questions the Corinthians have asked him or problems he's heard they're having. 1. Divisions in the church (1-4); 2. Questions surrounding sex and singleness (5-7); 3. How to navigate controversies in the church that threaten to undermine the mission (8-10) 4. Corporate worship wars (11-14) 5. Objections to the resurrection (15) and his final words (16).

In this final chapter Paul takes care of a few housekeeping items. He starts by urging the church in Corinth to set aside a weekly offering for the church in Jerusalem. A famine had hit Jerusalem, and a lot of believers were starving. Seeing the need, Paul gives some guidance on giving. He states that everyone should give on a regular basis to the local church in accordance with how God has blessed them. God often blesses the believer to be a blessing to the world around them.

Paul then shares with them his tentative plans. It's obvious that even Paul is not sure of what God is calling him to do so, he holds loosely to his plans in an effort to be flexible and adjust to God's direction. He even mentions that a great door of ministry has opened before him but with some opposition. This is a reminder for us that opposition along life's path doesn't always mean that you are heading in the wrong direction. This is why we need to seek the counsel of other believers and use discernment.

Paul's final encouragement to the church is wrapped up in five succinct commands that sum up everything he has taught in his letter. "*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love.*" (13-14). Paul uses military terms to show us what we are up against as believers.

The Christian life is not about comfort, it's about standing strong for the Gospel. We are commanded to be alert to what's happening in the world around us. To pay attention to the enemy of our soul who is trying to deceive, divide and destroy. And like soldiers standing up against danger, we must be strong and courageous in the middle of the spiritual battle all around us. Yet in this fight, there's one virtue that stands above them all. Above all, love. Because without love, we are back to being a "clanging cymbal". May we be a church that mirrors the love of God to the watching world by living out the Gospel wherever we go!



## Final Words

### SHARE (5-10 min)

1. Icebreaker Question: Describe a time when you were inspired by another believer. What about them inspired you the most? What about their lifestyle or the things they said stood out to you?

### STUDY (about 30 min) Read 1 Corinthians 16

2. How did God speak to you through the scripture and the sermon this week? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
3. What do you think Paul's main message is in the book of 1 Corinthians? What have you learned about God, yourself and the Church in this study?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. In light of this passage and the rest of 1 Corinthians, what kind of attitude should we have about giving? What makes giving so challenging?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 16:5-9. How do you determine God's calling and direction for your life? Like Paul, when have you experienced opposition with an "open door"? When opposition comes, how did you discern what to do?
6. In verse 13, what is Paul's final exhortation in how to live out their faith? What does it look like for you to "be on your guard and stand firm in the faith"?
7. Why do you think Paul encouraged the Corinthians to do everything in love? How is sharing the Gospel with others loving? What could it look like if believers loved like Paul did?
8. Soldiers stand up against danger and must be strong and courageous to win the battle. Knowing that Paul relates our lives to that of a soldier, how vital is it for us to be courageous in our walk with Christ? What does courage look like as you follow Jesus?

### SUPPORT (15 min)

PRAY: Spend some time identifying where you need to grow in your life when it comes to Paul's five commands in 1 Corinthians 16:13-14. *"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love."* Then pray together for God to strengthen you in these areas.