

# Resurrection implications: Do everything in love

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[ 0 : 00 ] Happy Mother's Day as well. Let me just echo what Ben said. Scripture indeed does call on us to honour our mothers every day, but today is a good day to particularly remember that.

So happy Mother's Day to all the mothers in our congregation. Let's get ready to hear from the word of the Lord, the Lord who cares for us, the Lord who is also like a mother.

And so let's pray and ask to hear from him now. Amen. Heavenly Father, I just pray, Lord, that you would speak to us this morning, even in the words of 1 Corinthians 16.

Please prepare us mentally, emotionally, spiritually to receive this and to hear the exhortation of Paul and true Paul to hear your exhortation for us to live in your ways.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Today, after two years, we finally come to the end of 1 Corinthians. I hope you've enjoyed the ride.

[ 1 : 11 ] I certainly have. After all, it's incredibly contemporary in the diversity of issues that it tackles, whether that's our fascination with celebrity, our confusion over sexuality, or how we navigate issues of conscience charitably.

So one thing is for sure, 1 Corinthians might be challenging at times, but it never is boring. And actually, don't you think that it would have been great, especially if we had ended 1 Corinthians last week?

I mean, what higher note could you end on than the promise of resurrection and an exhortation to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord? Now, that would have been a great way to finish.

But it didn't. And instead, we have 1 Corinthians chapter 16. And at first glance, 1 Corinthians 16 makes you go, eh.

After all, if you have an NIV, the chapter headings that have been given by the editors simply say things like personal requests and final greetings. In my commentaries, the commentators give this chapter headings like future plans and letter closing.

[ 2 : 28 ] A bit of an anticlimax, isn't it? But I want you to know that 1 Corinthians 16 is also God's gift to us. Because after we've scaled the heights of heaven in chapter 15, we're now being pulled back down to earth.

And we do need to be pulled back. Because yes, we do have this amazing hope of a future glorious resurrection. But until then, we live in this present world where we need to deal with mundane stuff like travel arrangements.

We have the great hope of 1 Corinthians 15, but we presently need to live in the world of 1 Corinthians 16. Well, that's why we need this chapter.

But 1 Corinthians 16 is more than just a random travel itinerary. In this chapter, Paul is responding to certain things that the Corinthians have previously brought up with him.

Verse 1 clearly assumes that his readers are familiar with this collection that he speaks about. While in verse 12, he appears to address a request that Apollos be sent to them.

[ 3 : 40 ] And in responding to these matters, Paul now takes the opportunity one last time to stress the main point that he has been hammering all throughout the second half of 1 Corinthians.

And that big point is well summarised right at the end of verse 14. Now, that sounds like an obvious thing to say, but let's sit down to think about it.

What are your plans and routines often motivated by? If you were to examine a typical week in your life, would you say that you do everything in love?

Or is it more accurate to perhaps say you do everything in haste? You're always in a rush to get somewhere, to get something done, to get someone to do something.

Or perhaps you do everything in anxiety. You work hard because you're motivated by a fear that otherwise you're not seen as good enough, or that you'll be left behind by your peers, or that you won't leave a mark in this world.

[ 5 : 00 ] Or perhaps you might subconsciously be like the Corinthian church, whom, as we've seen over the past few months, did everything for self.

And so, as Paul finishes off this letter by outlining his plans, he wants to set the example. He wants to show how even his everyday routines and plans are thoroughly informed by love.

And so if we're asking, how is a church to live in the meantime while waiting for our future resurrection? Well, let's look to Paul's example.

Do everything in love. So what does that look like? Well, this morning we're going to, first of all, see one overarching feature of love.

And then after that we'll see three ways that life of love is lived out as a church. So first, the overarching feature. And it's this. Love seeks to move towards relationship.

[ 6 : 07 ] Love seeks to move towards relationship. Now, Paul is an apostle. He's a pioneer. He's a leader. He's a trailblazer. But one thing he isn't, is a loner.

He's no one-man show. I wonder if you've noticed, as you read through this chapter, how he keeps naming names. There's Timothy, whom he obviously cares about, someone we know who will eventually be his long-term apprentice.

There's Apollos, whom he calls brother, clearly someone he's worked closely and well with. There are these others down in verses 15 to 17, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, people whom he's familiar with, people who gladden his heart.

And there's Priscilla and Aquila, friends and colleagues. And it's not just these individuals who come into view. There's the churches in the province of Asia, the church that meets at Aquila's and Priscilla's house.

There's also the Galatian church right at the beginning. And other brothers and sisters who are mentioned but remain unnamed. And the impression we get is that Paul is plucked into a whole web of relationships, a whole network of Christians.

[ 7 : 32 ] He knows about them. He knows them. They're visible to him. They're seen by him. And this isn't true just in 1 Corinthians.

If we were to flip over to chapter 16 of Romans, for instance, we'll see something similar. We'll see another long list of names.

Priscilla and Aquila are mentioned again. This time as those who put their lives on the line for Paul. Along with others whom we don't know anything about.

Like a certain Appellus, whom we are told has stood the test and been found faithful? Or Trifina and Trifossa, women who work hard in the Lord?

And so here's the key thing to see. Paul isn't just an ivory tower theologian. He isn't someone who merely talks about love. No, his ministry is built on love.

[ 8 : 36 ] He has obviously chosen to build relationships wherever he's gone to nurture them. And the end of 1 Corinthians and Romans gives us a glimpse into that reality.

And we can see that even in the travel plans that he makes. From verse 8, we know that he's currently in Ephesus where he plans to stay until Pentecost.

In verse 5, we are told that he hopes to make just a brief stopover in Macedonia. But verses 6 and 7, notice that he wants to come and see the Corinthian church in person.

And that he hopes to stay for a while. He wants to spend time with them. Now, later on, we'll see that one of the things that he needs to discuss with them is about money.

But here, we can see that he's not just interested in the Corinthians as donors. He isn't interested just in dropping by for a few hours to make a fundraising appeal.

[ 9 : 45 ] No. He's interested to be with them, to give himself to them. Now, that perhaps would be unremarkable if the Corinthians were people whom you imagine to be very pleasant and mature and good-humoured.

But as you and I very well know, they are anything but. This was a congregation that was quarrelsome, that sued one another, that looked down on Paul.

But that doesn't scare away Paul. He still moves towards them. He still wants to spend time with them. And so this is the first lesson that 1 Corinthians 16 wants us to absorb.

If we say we are the followers of the risen Jesus, then that means we move towards other people, not away from them.

We move towards other people, not away from them. That's how it works. You see, our God is a God who pursues people.

[ 10 : 59 ] In the Old Testament, he pursued Israel even after they rejected him, even after they said that they wanted to return to Egypt after he rescued them from slavery there.

But God guided them through the wilderness anyway. He pursues wayward prophets like Jonah, who on being told to go to Nineveh to speak God's word there, immediately heads in the opposite direction instead.

And we see that supremely in Jesus who came to seek and save the lost. He came to pursue a relationship with us.

And so servants and followers of Jesus pursue others too. We seek relationships with other Christians, taking turns to mutually share our minds and our hearts, our stories and our hopes, as they have been shaped by Christ, and then to pursue Christ together.

And that often requires face-to-face interaction. That requires us to practice being intentionally present with one another. In other words, that means that when you're with someone, don't be somewhere else.

[ 12 : 24 ] Give your attention to them. Help them know that you are 100% with them in that very moment. And as we make the effort to build relationships, as we respect one another, affirm one another's gifts, challenge each other over our sin, be willing to endure each other's weaknesses, all through the transforming power of the gospel, well, we are slowly but surely changed.

That's how God often changes us through other Christians. The 17th century pastor Richard Sips once wrote, God often suspends comfort to us to drive us to make use of our Christian friends by whom he purposes to do us good.

And that's why in verse 17 we're told that these three men, Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Archaicus, who were probably acting as messengers of the Corinthian church, that when they arrived at Paul's place, they provided Paul with much more than just a letter from the Corinthian church.

They were assigned to Paul that his ministry still had their support. According to verse 18, they had refreshed him in some way.

They ministered to his heart. And maybe that's why whenever we find mention of Priscilla and Aquila in the Bible as we do here in verse 19, they always seem to be hosting and welcoming people.

[ 14 : 07 ] Just do a word search of their name and you'll find that. They know pursuing others matter. And we move towards even difficult people as well.

I wonder if you're struck by that very last verse of 1 Corinthians. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. That's what Paul says to this always quarrelling, overly boastful, exasperating Corinthian church.

My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Isn't that remarkable? You know, in verse 21, he says that he writes this with his very own hand. How can he do this?

The clue is in verse 23. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. He who has truly tasted deeply of the Lord's grace is able to offer that same grace to others.

He who understands that only Jesus and no one else can truly fix people are free to serve them. You see, here's the truth.

[ 15 : 30 ] Love is inefficient. It simply isn't the most efficient way of relating to other people. It's messy.

It's hard. It can be confronting. Not least because it often reveals that we are not as kind or as patient or as good as we believe ourselves to be.

And so it reveals to us our continual need for the Lord's grace. Now perhaps that's what Apollos needed. In verse 12, we are told that he is unwilling at the moment to visit the Corinthians.

And there is no way of knowing for sure why. But perhaps he's not happy with them because they have been misusing his name back in chapter 1.

Moving towards people, especially if they are difficult, is hard. But that's the work of love we are called to do.

[ 16 : 35 ] And that may be why Paul urges Apollos to go see them. So here's a question for us this morning. How are you and I doing on that front?

There's a reasonably sized group in our hall here this morning. Praise God. But a group of people in a hall does not necessarily mean that we are a community.

But what God wants us to aim for in the words of our fourth core conviction is to be a community of truth and love. And that means we need to be willing to move towards people.

Now of course we have different relational capacities we have different personalities. God isn't asking an introvert to become an extrovert. But keeping that in mind are we still willing to move towards people even if it's inconvenient?

How are we doing on that front? So that's one overarching feature. Seek to move towards relationships.

[ 17 : 53 ] But what other specific ways can we keep loving as a church? Well I think we can draw out three more things from today's passage. So here's one way we do so.

Love by giving. Love by giving. And in this case giving financially. In verse 1 Paul refers to some collection for the Lord's people which verse 3 we discover is for the Jerusalem church.

Around that time a severe famine had struck the region bringing great hardship to those in Jerusalem. We can find reference to this at the end of Acts 11.

And so Paul decided to initiate a great social concerns project. He got the churches in Galatia and Corinth to give financially. and he wants them to do so from counter cultural motives.

In the ancient world and to a certain extent still today charitable giving was not really done out of pure motives. Rather it is a way of highlighting your status to show that you're so rich and you're so powerful that you can meet even the needs of others not just yourselves.

[ 19 : 11 ] And the expectation is that your name will be praised. But by initiating this project Paul is saying to the Corinthians well let's give to these people whom you might never meet in person who might never sing your praises on the streets in Corinth.

But that's okay since you give not to be praised but because you love. But that's not all there is to it.

You see this isn't just about charity. This was also an opportunity to demonstrate gospel solidarity. The Jerusalem church was a predominantly Jewish church.

The church in Corinth however had plenty of Gentiles. And traditionally the divide between the Jews and the Gentiles were as wide as I suppose the divide between Russian and Ukrainian soldiers right now.

But by giving here was an opportunity to show how the gospel bridges that gap. Here's an opportunity to show how deep Christ's love goes.

[ 20 : 22 ] Here's an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of fellowship between two congregations that on the face of it look very different to one another.

And that's why Paul is so eager to take up the matter. Here's an opportunity to show gospel love in action. And in verses two to four we find some helpful principles for Christian giving in general.

So let me just mention them. Notice that this was to happen on the first day of every week. In other words Christian giving is regular we don't just give when we feel like it.

And tied to that Christian giving is therefore planned. The Christians are called to set aside a sum of money. This isn't something that was done last minute without any thought given to it at all.

It's not something where if the offering bag was to go around you quickly look in your wallet to see if you have an extra 10 ringgit to throw inside. No.

[ 21 : 35 ] Post-stress here is actually on thinking through our giving beforehand. And so that's what we should do. By all means, pray about the amount to give.

And then afterwards, this is where setting up a regular direct debit from your bank account can be more helpful than just dumping loose change in an offering back. By doing so, you can be confident your giving is now regular and planned rather than irregular and haphazard.

And of course, you have a chance to review it periodically. That's how you love better in your giving. And if you have more, give more.

in that sense, Christian giving is proportionate. That's what Paul is getting at when he talks about in keeping with your income. Verse 2, perhaps God has blessed you with a high-paying job.

But how can you love others with that? How can you give so that the work of the Lord we talked about last week can keep on multiplying? And it's something every Christian must consider.

[ 22 : 52 ] verse 2 again says, each one of you should set aside a sum of money, not just a few of you. And finally, verses 3 and 4, such gifts should be handled with integrity.

Paul makes sure that it is a few reliable men who look after the money, and he makes sure that it's not handled by just one person. There's a team who can help keep each other accountable.

And so we love by giving. Giving to other churches in need, giving to advance the course of the gospel, giving in a regular and planned manner.

Now how are we doing on this front? It's great that over the years our church I know has not been afraid to give, whether to courses here in Sarawak or overseas to places like Myanmar or the Philippines.

Well, praise God for that. But let's not take that for granted. Let's keep doing everything out of love. Let's not give because of guilt or because of pride.

[ 24 : 05 ] Let's love by giving. Would you like to know some ministries that are worth giving to? Well, come speak to me afterwards or to anyone of our elders.

So that's one way to love. Here's another way. Love by giving ourselves to the Lord's work and honouring those who do.

Love by giving ourselves to the Lord's work and honouring those who do. I've mentioned already how Paul is not shy about naming names and he's not shy to honour them.

In verse 10, we learn that Timothy is coming to the Corinthians and Paul is anxious that he be well received. We're not sure exactly why but it appears that Paul had some reason to worry that Timothy might not be welcomed warmly by the Corinthians.

Perhaps it was because he would be seen as a representative of Paul and well you know Paul is not exactly the most popular person in the Corinthian church right now given how he rebuked them.

[ 25 : 17 ] Or perhaps it's because Timothy is precisely not like Paul or Apollos or any of the other leaders whom the Corinthians felt were of great reputation.

So Paul urges them see to it he has nothing to fear while he is with you for he is carrying on the work of the Lord just as I am.

So here is someone who is committed to bringing the gospel of transformation to others. And suppose it's verse 11 don't despise him. Welcome him. Love him.

Help him. To send him on his way in peace apparently was an idiomatic way then of saying provide for his needs. Honor him.

And then in verse 11 Paul mentions Apollos. Now remember back in chapter 1 the Corinthians were divided into factions over who was considered the best Christian leader.

[ 26 : 24 ] And there was clearly a substantial Apollos fan club in Corinth. And so it would have been so easy for Paul to get envious about Apollos. But there is no sense of that here.

Paul doesn't see himself in competition with Apollos at all. No, for him they are both doing the work of the Lord. And if Apollos can do the Lord's work in an effective way amongst the Corinthians, that even better.

He honors what Apollos is doing and he wants him to keep ministering to the Corinthians because in doing so he believes that the gospel is honored.

And then in verses 15 to 18 he praises Stephanus, Fortunatus and Archaicus. Again, we don't really know much about them but given that Stephanus' household is mentioned he was perhaps a man of means and Fortunatus and Archaicus were perhaps part of his household.

So it's possible that they had some status. More than that one thing we're sure about verse 15 is that they are the first converts. They're part of the founding generation of this church.

[ 27 : 48 ] So they are well established and verse 16 suggests they might even have been leaders in this church. But what aspect of them does poor core attention do?

Well look again at verse 15. They have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. Well that's what they have poured out their energy into.

That's what they're about. They don't poor rank. They're servants of Jesus first and foremost. And that's what Paul highlights.

And so Paul says honour them. Verse 18 such men deserve recognition. And verse 16 submit to them.

These are the men you want to follow. And so what are some lessons that we can draw from this? Well let's look at Stephanas' household again.

[ 28 : 49 ] In verse 15 that word devoted can also be translated appointed. But who appointed Stephanas for ministry? Well the answer is no one.

And yet he didn't wait around to be caught so to speak. He simply took it upon himself to start serving and ministering to others. Well that's how we do everything in love.

We see needs. We see opportunities. And where we have the appropriate gifting we simply go for it. We don't wait around for people to call upon us or to beg us to serve.

We don't wait for the pastor to spend extra energy to try to convince you to serve. No, we just get on with it. And as we do so, we can refresh the spirit of others.

That's how they're described, isn't it? How beautiful that is to be described in that way. Wouldn't you love to be called a refreshing person?

[ 29 : 57 ] And then we honour all those involved in gospel work everywhere. Now, that doesn't mean just the pastors, although of course we want to honour all those in full-time ministry who are working hard.

But we also honour those whom we know take time to meet one-to-one to read the Bible and pray with others behind the scenes. We honour those we know who take time to patiently build up others with little fanfare.

Have you noticed such a person recently in our congregation? If you do, what can you do to honour such a person today? And finally, one more way to learn from today's passage.

Love by standing firm in Jesus and urging others to do so. Love by standing firm in Jesus and urging others to do so. In verse 13, Paul gives a rapid-fire list of exhortations.

Be on your guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. In many ways, he's going back to the beginning of chapter 15. He's urging them to stand firm on what they have received, the gospel.

[ 31 : 17 ] But why does he choose at this moment to call us to stand firm? Well, verse 9 hints at one thing that might cause us to stumble.

Paul tells us why he's currently still at Ephesus. Because a great door for effective work has been opened for him. Now, that's very exciting, isn't it? But at the same time, there's an accompanying challenge.

Verse 9 again, there are many who oppose me. And that's the reality of a lifespan following Jesus and giving ourselves to his work.

There will be opposition from outside. So, stand firm. But, that external opposition probably isn't the Corinthians' greatest present danger.

And it's probably not ours either. But there is another danger. One that is more dangerous and subtle. And it's hinted at in verse 22.

[ 32 : 27 ] Paul says, if anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed. Wow, that's pretty strong language. But it's truthful language.

Paul is telling us that when it comes to following Jesus, there is no middle ground. We either love the Lord, or we don't. And the Corinthian church, by becoming obsessed with worldly values such as status and power, were in danger of losing their love for the Lord.

And that's why Paul asked them to be on their guard. That was their greater danger. love for Paul loves them by warning them about it.

What about us? Those of us in home fellowship groups have been going through Revelation 1 to 4 over the past few months. And one of the warnings to the churches in those chapters is the warning against lukewarmness.

The warning that even though we work hard, we can still be in danger of losing our first love. Now is that where we're at? I certainly think that that's a greater danger for us than any external persecution.

[ 33 : 49 ] A church is in danger whenever they go through the motions without love for Jesus. So today, honestly ask ourselves, do we really, really, really, really love Jesus?

Do we do everything out of love for him? Or are we doing stuff just for the mere sake of it? Or perhaps even worse, not even doing any stuff because we don't love Jesus?

Jesus. Jesus. And if you can confidently say, yes, I'm loving Jesus, well, great. Then let's keep encouraging one another to pursue him wholeheartedly.

Let's warn each other against forgetting the Lord and let all our plans and all our routines be done out of love for our Lord Jesus who first loved you and I.

Let's do everything in love. And as you do, may the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

[ 35 : 12 ] Those are the parting words of Paul to us. Shall we listen to them? Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for the letter of 1 Corinthians.

Thank you for the way that it has instructed us and challenged us and encouraged us in so many different ways. Thank you for its great reminder to us of the indispensability of love.

love is patient, love is kind, does not envy, does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, not easily angered.

And we thank you that we see all those traits in the Lord Jesus. Thank you that the Lord Jesus is so gracious and so patient with us even when we sometimes are weak and we don't always listen as we ought.

Thank you that you move towards us. and we pray that this morning we will move towards you, we will respond to you, and we would want to love you again by the power of the Holy Spirit and to love others as well.

[ 36 : 30 ] All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.