

1 Corinthians Session 1: A Triumphant Ending (1 Cor 15:50-16:24)

(Scripture references based on NIV)

1. Key Learning Objectives

Key pointers to keep in mind as you prepare and lead the session.

To understand that:

- The Christian does not labour in vain, but rather may stand firm and find assurance in God through the true gospel of Christ's death and resurrection.
- We live out our lives for God through our generous giving, loving one another, and serving one another.

For leaders to note:

- **Supplementary questions** are there to assist leaders in guiding the youths in answering the main questions, and are not necessary if they are able to respond well.
- **Probe further** questions aim to help develop a deeper understanding of the passage, and may be asked after the main/supplementary questions.
- For each question, the bullet points contain the main ideas, while the paragraphs below them provide further elaboration.

2. Warm-up activity / Starter Question

These questions are meant to establish a baseline level of understanding or tease the themes of today's passage. You may pick one of the two. There is no need to hear from everyone or correct any opinions here.

- What are some things that give you motivation in your current phase of life in school/army/work?
- What are the hallmarks of a good and healthy community?

3. Opening Prayer

Father God, we give you thanks for bringing us together today to continue exploring your Word. Open our hearts and minds to the message you have for us today, and help us to reflect the truths in this passage in our lives, confidently serving you and growing in our love for You, Your Word, and for those around us as well. In Jesus' name, Amen.

4. Context

- In the previous study, Paul highlighted the centrality of Christ's death and resurrection to the Christian faith, asserting that it is important for the Corinthians to recognise that believers will go through the same death and resurrection that Christ did, and that this truth has many implications on (i) the person of Christ, (ii) the faithfulness of God to His promises and plan, (iii) the testimony and labouring of the church, and (iv) the re-creation of believers' bodies.
- Paul ends his letter to the Corinthians by encouraging them with these truths, urging them to continue labouring for the Lord, and to love and serve one another.
- Paul's final words are purposely included to round off the various arguments and points that he makes throughout the letter, ultimately pointing back to the message of Christ, and the transformed lives they should live in light of their salvation.

5. Scripture Reading

Assign one or two youths to read the passage aloud.

6. Discussion Questions

1) From 1 Corinthians 15:50-57, how does Paul feel about the resurrection of the bodies of believers?

Probe further: Why does he feel this way? What implications does this resurrection have on believers?

- Paul is thankful for the resurrection of the bodies of believers (v57).
- Has overcome the penalty of sin that has separated us from God's new creation.
- Death is ultimately defeated.

Paul is thankful (v57) for the victory over death that Christ has achieved at the cross, resulting in the resurrection of the bodies of believers. He begins by pointing out that as we are sinful creatures who dwell in a sinful world, our current forms cannot exist in the new creation that God is making," (v50). Our incompatibility with the perfection of stating that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. God necessitates a physical renewal of our bodies, and, as Paul has helpfully spelled out for us in the previous section of chapter 15, there will be a resurrection of the body. We "will all be changed", and the dead "will be raised imperishable" (v50). How great and amazing this truth is! The perishable is "clothed with the imperishable", and the mortal "with immortality" (v51), and Paul declares triumphantly, "Death has been swallowed up in victory", giving all thanks to God our Father who has saved us from the penalty of our sins.

2) What does he call on the Corinthians to do in light of this bodily resurrection?

Probe further: Why can we confidently do this?

- Stand firm in the faith, and give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord (v58).
- Our labour in the Lord will bear fruit, and is not in vain (v58).

Paul hopes that the Corinthians will cling on to this truth and use it to persevere in their current situation, not falling prey to the worldly influences around them or continuing in their disputes amongst one another. “Therefore”, he says “stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain” (v58), continuing in our walk with Him in full assurance of our glorious future.

He then gives 3 ways to live out this truth in our lives: (i) giving generously, (ii) living generously, and (iii) serving generously, and we shall cover these next.

Giving Generously

3) What does Paul tell the Corinthians to do in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4?

Probe further: How does he tell them to do this? Why does Paul want the collections to be conducted in this particular manner?

Giving generously is not something that comes easily to most people, as there are many obstacles in the way that prevent us from doing so, such as idolatry of worldly riches and physical needs such as food and housing, among others. However, Paul tells the church to follow the example of the Galatian church and give generously, setting out 4 principles for them to adhere to.

Observation question	Reference	Why might this be important for the Corinthians to know/do?
When are the Corinthians supposed to conduct their collections?	On the first day of the week (v2)	<u>Their giving should be a priority</u> , and they are to begin “on the first day of the week” (v2). Just as the Jews were to tithe, or give a tenth of their crops, their own giving should also be done before considering other expenses and purchases, and not out of any leftover loose change that remains.

<p>Which of the Corinthians are to give/tithe?</p>	<p>Each one of you (v2)</p> <p>Essentially, all of them!</p>	<p><u>It is possible for all, whether rich or poor, to give of their own possessions.</u></p> <p>He does not just call upon those who are rich and materially blessed to give, but that “each one” of them should give (v2), including those who are less well off. Just as the poor widow still made her offering in the temple (Mark 12:41-44), all should still try to give. While the amount of giving may vary, the reality of giving should not.</p>
<p>How much are they to give?</p>	<p>“In keeping with their income” (v3)</p>	<p><u>Believers are to give according to the material blessings they have received</u>, “in keeping with their income” (v2).</p> <p>Paul calls upon the church to be <u>good stewards</u> of what they have, and encourages those with more to give more, as they have the capacity to do so. For those with less, he advises them to be financially prudent, still having an attitude of generosity while being aware of the practical limits of what they can give.</p>
<p>What attitude should they have when thinking about giving?</p> <p><i>Supplementary question: When should they start thinking about giving?</i></p>	<p>They should be <u>intentional</u> about giving, “saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made” (v2)</p>	<p><u>Giving is an intentional act of service, not something that happens by chance.</u></p> <p>Paul tells them to plan and take charge of their giving , and that they should start the collections early so that “no collections will have to be made” when he reaches (v2). Believers should always be ready to give, and not wait until needs or emergencies arise for them to be reminded of the need to give.</p> <p>Furthermore, Paul’s request for the Corinthians to select people that will deliver their gifts to Jerusalem, possibly accompanied by Paul (v3-4), also highlights the intentionality that he wants them to have for the poor (Gal 2:10), especially fellow believers (Rom 15:25). Travelling to another region</p>

		would have required much effort to plan, and emphasised how important their giving was.
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Living Generously

4) From v5-9, what is stopping Paul from doing what he wants to do?

Probe further: How important do you think this decision is to Paul?

- Paul recognises the opportunity to carry out God’s work where he is currently (i.e. Ephesus), and chooses stay on rather than visit the Corinthians (v8-9).
- Serving God is of utmost importance and takes precedence over anything else.

Paul refrains from travelling to Corinth as he is aware of the need to continue his work servicing the Lord in other areas (v8-9), despite the fact that he had a strong desire to visit them. In fact, his desire to do so is so great to the point that he would spend the entire winter together with them if time permits, preparing for his future travels spreading the gospel elsewhere. However, he says, because a “great door for effective work has opened to me [Paul]” he views this as an opportunity from the Lord to continue his current work in Ephesus (v8-9). His current labours for the Lord must come first, and that it is not yet time for him to visit them, but rather it is better for him to remain in Ephesus for a while.

5) What are Paul’s desires in v10-11?

Probe further: Why does Paul want them to do these things? How do Paul’s descriptions of Timothy further emphasise this point?

- Treat Timothy hospitably, just as they would treat Paul and any other workers in Christ (v10)!
- So that God’s work may be continued through Timothy smoothly (v10-11).
- As both a “fellow worker” and a “brother”, they should show love to Timothy in the same way they love Paul.

Paul’s request in v10-11 for the Corinthians to be good hosts to Timothy when he visits them highlights another way he wants them to be living out their lives. As fellow workers in Christ (v10), Paul would have wanted them to treat Timothy in the same way that they would have treated him, not with intimidation (v10) or contempt (v11), but as gracious hosts who would help him along his journey in peace. Furthermore, he also places Timothy along with “the brothers” (v11), and demonstrates the closeness of relationship that he has with Timothy, once again calling upon the Corinthians to show the same love that they show Paul to Timothy.

6) From v12-14, what is Paul's warning to the Corinthians?

Supplementary question: What was the consequence of their infighting and quarrels amongst one another?

Probe further: Why do you think this warning comes right after his request regarding Timothy?

- Avoid infighting within the church, as it only serves to fragment the church and cause division amongst themselves.
- This stresses the importance of treating one another hospitably and with love.

As a result of their disputes, which we saw in chapter 1, Paul says that Apollos is no longer going to return to Corinth despite his urging, or at least for the time being. It may have been caused by a rift in the relationship between Apollos and the Corinthians as he might have been upset at how some of them were using his name in the factional arguments, a consequence that Paul would have desperately wanted to avoid.

7) How does v13-14 help prevent this from occurring again?

Supplementary question: Instead of arguing over divisions, what does Paul want them to place their focus on instead? Think about the country that the church was in!

Probe further: How might this be mirrored in the way that Paul wants them to treat Timothy and Apollos?

- Instead of arguing with one another, focus on what truly matters - fighting against sin and temptation, and to continue showing love in all circumstances.
- Their fight is not with one another, but the pagan world around them.
- Do everything in love, loving each other and remain united as God's people.

Here, Paul encourages the Corinthians to be thinking about more important things in their walk with God, and to continue showing love to each other.

The call to “be on [their] guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong” (v13) serves to guide them towards the true nature of the battle that they are fighting: not against one another, but rather against the worldly forces and temptations of the pagan country they are in that seek to draw them away from God. They are to be united in this battle, so that none of them will be pushed away like in the example of Apollos.

Lastly, to “do everything in love” (v14) rounds off this point, as it encapsulates the examples of both Timothy and Apollos. Love for both God and fellow brother/sister

is shown by treating one another with hospitality and graciousness, building one another up in love, and remaining united as God's people.

Serving Generously

8) What example in v15-18 does Paul want the Corinthians to emulate?

Probe further: How are the attitudes of the people mentioned an example to them?

- Serve and be subject to one another, just as the household of Stephanas did (v15).
- Paul's joy at how they serve shows us how wonderful it is to serve others.
- Be driven by transformed hearts to wholehearted service to the saints.

Our love for others (v14) should spur us on to serve them as well, and this example is clearly shown through the household of Stephanas which Paul finds great joy in recounting, using it to demonstrate just how they should act going forwards. Being the first converts in Achaia whom Paul baptised (1:16), the transformative nature of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit in them moved them to serve others selflessly, devoting themselves to aid the Lord's people. Being a young church themselves, Paul desired for the Corinthians to do the same, remembering the wonderful message of salvation they received and using it to serve others in love.

Note: Paul is not saying that the Corinthians have fallen short in their service to him when he mentions that he lacked certain things from them, but rather probably meant that the household made up for the fellowship he had with the Corinthians in his absence while he was away from them.

7. Main Discipleship Takeaway

- The power of Christ's death and resurrection should spur us on to live out our lives for God, as we await the new creation.

8. Application / Reflection

Split up into smaller groups to share. Leaders are encouraged to have prepared their own thoughts and sharings for the application questions.

- 1) How does the knowledge of our future bodily resurrection encourage you to live out your lives for God in school/army/work?
- 2) How can you personally continue to show love and support to our fellow brothers and sisters in YM?
- 3) (In response to v15-18) How could we practically show appreciation to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

9. Closing Prayer

Remain in your smaller groups and take turns to pray for each other. Where there is time, encourage members to share about specific areas for prayer in their lives.

- Thank God for the wonderful blessings we have in Christ, and for sustaining us in our walk with Him.
- Pray that we would live out our lives for God, serving one another in love.