

Seizing Our Moment of Opportunity

1 Corinthians 16

Pastor Guy Gray

An Open Door

When opportunity knocks, we need to answer the door. Better yet, we need to step through the door and seize the God given moments of opportunity. God goes before us. He opens doors (see 1 Corinthians 16:9). He is on a mission to impact people, communities, cities and even nations with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we believe what is written in Corinthians, we understand both what God has done and what He is continuing to do in this world. The Cross speaks of God's radical intervention in the past. The Gift of the Spirit speaks of His presence, work and power in the present. The Resurrection points to the amazing victory of Christ and our hope for our ultimate future. Wow—that's a lot! All of it should "move" us. All of it proves that God is not finished. Even now, God is opening great doors of effective ministry for us. How will we respond? Will we move out in faith, even though we know it may be difficult? Even though we know we will experience opposition? This is our challenge. The whole Book of 1 Corinthians has led to this. It's all designed to get us "unstuck"—to get us moving forward in our faith in Christ and our ministry for Christ.

Nothing Happens Until We Give

The final Chapter of 1 Corinthians begins with instructions for taking an offering! In chapter 15, we were presented with the awesome hope of resurrection life with Jesus our Lord. But in chapter 16 we are brought "back to earth" with the practical necessities of ministry. It all fits perfectly, because there is so much need and so much yet to do in this broken world. Nothing is going to happen in the real world until somebody gives something. To impact the world—to do ministry—we have to give. We have to give of our time, our money and our talents! That's the only way that real ministry happens. Until someone gives in these ways, ministry is just an idealistic notion in our heads. Paul reminds them to take an offering. Get practical. In order to step through doors of ministry opportunity we are going to have to give.

Shared Ministry—Wonderful Partners

No one can do effective ministry alone, not even Paul. Timothy, Apollos, Stephanas, Aquila and Priscilla—these are the names of people who shared ministry with Paul. There is a world of opportunity—a great harvest of lives to be rescued through Christ and the Gospel. But workers are needed! That's why Jesus told us to pray for workers to be raised up (Matthew 9:37-38). The people listed in 1 Corinthians 16 are the answer to Paul's prayers for help. They are his partners in world changing ministry—this is how it works. Likewise, each person God brings to River West, He brings as a partner in ministry for Jesus and the Gospel—not just the Pastors or leadership or staff, but every one of us. If we are going to seize our moment of opportunity for Christ, we are going to have to do it together.

One Final Word

"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love." (1 Corinthians 16:13-14). It's the perfect ending. Maybe though, it's better to say it's the perfect word to move us forward in our faith and ministry for Christ. It reminds us to be careful, because some have lost their way as Christians and have conformed to the values and opinions of the culture around them rather than following the way of Christ and living in the faith of the Gospel. It reminds us that it will take courage and strength to live out our faith. It shows us that the way of love is the key. To truly walk in the way of love we must not water down the truth of the Gospel. We must stay focused on the truth of the Cross of Christ, the Community of Christ and the Resurrection hope of Christ. This is both the "first" and the "final" word of Corinthians. May the Lord help us to be "that kind of church" in a broken world! May we step

forward together, recognizing our moment of opportunity as a church—believing that God has opened a great door of effective ministry for us!
And know that there will always be real opposition!

Questions for Discussion & Reflection

This week, read through Chapter 16 of 1 Corinthians each day. Let the Lord speak to your heart. Pray—journal—listen.

In verse 9 Paul speaks of “a great door for effective work” that has opened for him. In his sensitivity to this opportunity and his resolve to respond, he tells the Corinthians that he will stay in Ephesus. What are the doors for effective ministry that are open to you right now? How have you responded to these opportunities? Based on the message of 1 Corinthians, how **should** you respond?

Similarly, are there areas in your life where verse 13 is particularly applicable (“...stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong...”)?

River West Happenings...

Today...

Sunday, April 20th

El Salvador Prayer Partners

@ 10:30am between services

Partner through prayer with one of the River West team members going to El Salvador this week.

Thursday April 24th Foundations: Christianity Throughout the World

7-8:30pm

This is the last session in our first series of Foundations. Come and hear this fascinating presentation on what it's like to be a Christian in other parts of the world. Presented by John Warton

Wednesday, April 30th

Global Missions Prayer Group at The Nave's Home @ 7pm

This is the perfect opportunity to find out how God is reaching out to other parts of the world through River West. Join Pastor Chris and others at the Nave's home on the last Wednesday of each month. Contact Pastor Chris at 699-2226 or chris@riverwest.org

Saturday, April 26th-Saturday May 3rd,

El Salvador Mission Trip

Your support through prayer is appreciated as we send off 20 River West Volunteers on our 9th trip to Nuevo Renacer village through our partnership with Agros.