

New Year Necessities

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

INTRODUCTION

The New Year is upon us; new resolutions are in play...new goals are in sight and new action plans are in effect. For many or most people, the New Year includes resolutions or goals or desires that have to do with health or lifestyle choices that result in healthier living. Similarly, **2021** has arrived and it's time for us as a church to make key decisions about our health...church health that is.

The basic question is not how many people are present, but how Christ-like are the people? How much are they allowing the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to impact their lives? Are the people growing in the Word and in their relationship with Christ? What kind of families does it have? What kind of values, priorities, and pursuits are controlling the lives of its people? Are they honest in business, trained to share their faith, involved in ministry and impacting their workplace, their neighborhoods, friends, associates, and family? **In short, a successful church is a church that knows God, makes Him known to others in such a way that she does not contradict her message by the way she behaves in this world.**

In **1 Corinthians**, Paul writes to a confused church to try to straighten out their bad behavior and theology. **1 Cor** was written by Paul about thirty years after the resurrection of Jesus. It was addressed to a group of Christians in the Greek city of Corinth. They lived in one of the most thoroughly pagan (sinful) cities of the ancient world. **As with any believer who tries to take seriously the call of Christ in a non-Christian world, they struggled.** They had questions. They were confused, worldly; they frequently made mistakes. In the last chapter, we find a number of instructions and greetings from Paul. In the middle of his final greetings, Paul inserts a short but profound statement of advice to his readers. ***Tucked away in the middle of the final chapter are two verses that I want to examine with you. Verses that contain what I would call new year necessities.***

Please turn to **1 Corinthians 16:3-14**. Final words should be important words. I recognize that. I think Paul recognized that as well. I believe he carefully chose the way he would close **1 Corinthians**. The message found in these verses is simple and clear. In **five** simple **imperatives** Paul lays out principles that these believers needed to hear, to heed, and to remember if they wanted their future faith and church life to be what both they and God wanted them to be. Paul's brief words continue to be useful and powerful advice for Christians who desire to serve the Savior.

Please note with me that...

I. We must be _____ in matters of faith (16:13)

The first four imperatives of our text are all military terms. First century readers would have recognized them as such. They are also present imperatives in the grammar. This means they are commands that are intended to be continuing habit patterns, not just something that is done once and then forgotten.

Notice the four tough-minded commands. First...

A. 'Be _____'

B. 'Stand _____ in the faith'

C. 'Act like _____'

Spiritual maturity demands courageous application of the truth, strict support of what we know is spiritually true and the standards that are true, and bold opposition to what we know is false. **How can I grow up? You need to feed on the Word of God.**
APPLICATION: *How goes your Bible reading?*

I submit to you **3 action steps** you must take on a regular basis:

1. _____ it!
2. _____ it! Why?
 - a) _____ to Christ
 - b) Daily _____ over sin
 - c) _____ and _____
3. _____ on it!

As you read & study God's word, you need to reflect on God's word. Ask yourself:

- a) Is there a **SIN** to forsake?
- b) Is there a **PROMISE** to claim?
- c) Is there an **ATTITUDES** or **ACTIONS** to Adopt or Avoid
- e) Is there a **COMMAND** to OBEY?
- f) Is there an **EXAMPLE** to FOLLOW

The next command is...

D. 'Be _____'

Be alert. Stay firm. Be men of courage. Remain strong. This is what it means to be tough-minded in matters of faith.

Without some tough-mindedness, a church has no identity. There is certainly nothing to fortify young and old against the assaults of the enemies. Without this toughness of spirit, there is nothing and no one we can count on when we are under temptation and attack. There is nothing to hold on to.

But there is more. If this toughness is all there is, a church can easily turn into a mean, harsh, legalistic, ugly fighting fellowship that no one wants to be a part of or remain with. The beauty of a church comes from the proper balance of doctrine and love. And Paul's fifth command speaks to this.

Please note with me that...

II. We must be _____ in matters of fellowship (16:14)

Doing church from now until Jesus returns calls for such love.

We must demonstrate our love to God in our worship.

We must love God more than we love our own preferences.

We must love our neighbor and care about his needs with no less love than we care for ours. Love does not seek its own.

We must love in our giving. Selfish, stingy, self-protecting greed will never do. Only self-sacrificing love will suffice.

We must love in our forgiving. Getting even, telling off, talking back, or angry encounters will not work if we desire to please God this year and beyond.

We must love our brothers and sisters even when they are wrong.

We must love those that do not know God - the lost around us. Only when people are loved and know it will they want to find out what makes a church tick. Only when outsiders see people who love one another unconditionally, all of the time, will they want to become insiders.

Make no mistake about it. **Love is not easy. Not everyone will love back. Love involves words but includes action. Love is an act of the will. You and I choose to love.** Love is a life assignment. Those who do church well keep working on it.

Where do you get this type of love? The Bible declares that the fruit of the Spirit is love. Therefore, this type of love is a byproduct of knowing God and living under His control. The Bible pictures this kind of love in **1 Cor 13:4-7** (*turn in your Bible to this passage*).

In **1 Cor 13** we see:

- **Love's** _____
- **Love's** _____
- **Love's** _____

In short, love takes people as they are; does not assume the worst in people. Love trusts God for the risks involved in loving His people.

CONCLUSION

Will you commit to living 2021 for God's pleasure?

- **For some, this means handing over control**
- **For others, this means deciding to do things God's way and not yours.**