

# Connecting Faith With Life

*1 Corinthians 16:13-14*

Today is Father's Day. It is not always easy being a father. One cynic, speaking from his own experience, noted that children go through four fascinating stages. First they call you DaDa. Then they call you Daddy. As they mature they call you Dad. Finally they call you collect.

If there is anything the church as a whole needs today it godly men, spiritual men, men of integrity that set the example for others.

In two verses in 1 Corinthians 16 we have five commands for godly men. Today I want us to seek to understand and obey each of these five commands. We are to be watchful, steadfast, courageous, strong and loving.

## I. Be Watchful (v.13a).

In verse 13, Paul begins by giving us a one word directive, "**watch**." It comes from gregoreo which can be translated "be alert, be awake, be vigilant." The NIV translates this, "**Be on your guard**," Literally it is, "**Watch you!**" The King James Bible says it that way: "**Watch ye!**" You get the idea. Be vigilant. Be on the alert. "**Watch ye!**"

Negatively, it means "don't be sleepy, lethargic, apathetic, unprepared, unattentive." We find this word some twenty-two times in the New Testament and it almost always refers to believers being spiritually alert rather than spiritually indifferent.

Many of the believers in the Corinthian church were spiritually lethargic. They were certainly not carefully guarding their faith. They were easily swayed from sound doctrine by worldly philosophies. They didn't seek unity but were divisive, even suing each other in secular courts. They followed their own selfish desires in the areas of marriage, singleness and divorce. They perverted their spiritual gifts to gratify themselves. Most importantly, they failed to exhibit love.

Have you ever been spiritually indifferent? Have you ever become apathetic toward the things of God?

We all have spiritual highs and lows. There are times when we feel especially close to the Lord, when we delight in Him, we readily worship Him and seek to be obedient in all areas. But, there are also times when we do not feel particularly close to the Lord. We may go through the motions but in our hearts we have drifted away. In Isaiah 29:13 the Lord says, "...**these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me...**"

Spiritually lethargy ran rampant in Ephesus too. In Jesus' letter to the seven churches in Revelation, He says to Ephesus, "**Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent**" (Rev.2:4-5).

The key to avoiding spiritual apathy is to be spiritually alert. As Paul says in our text, we are to "**watch**." What are we to watch for? I see at least six things we should watch for, two are positive and four are negative.

#### A. WE ARE TO WATCH FOR THE LORD'S RETURN.

Every Christians ought to be **“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”** (Tit.2:13). Jesus told a story of apathetic workers who were not vigilant in there master's absence and said in Matthew 24:42, **“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”** He said in Matthew 25:13, **“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”** 2 Peter 3:10 reminds us that the Lord's coming will be a surprise for many, **“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...”**

Do you believe the Scriptures? Do you believe the Lord will return? Do you believe that it could happen at any time? That kind of faith will change how we live. Romans 13:11 says, **“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”**

#### B. WE ARE TO WATCH FOR OPPORTUNITIES.

We are to watch for the Lord's return and we are to watch for God-given opportunities. God leads us to people and situations where we can share His love through His gospel. In one of the Bible stories in VBS this week Jesus purposely avoided the popular route from Judah to Galilee that He might go through Samaria and meet a sinful woman at a well. It changed her life and the lives of almost everyone in her village.

God is working in this world, calling people to Himself. Jesus said He came **“to seek and save that which was lost”** (Lk.19:10). We must be alert. We must be watchful to see where God is working, where He is opening hearts and minds and then join Him in His work. We are to be **“redeeming the time, because the days are evil”** (Eph.5:16).

#### C. WE ARE TO WATCH OUT FOR SATAN.

1 Peter 5:8-9 says, **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”**

Like a lion, Satan is a predator. He can't have your soul but he can destroy your life if you are not watchful. He focuses much energy on drawing us away from the Lord and leading us into sin. We must be aware that we have an enemy, we are engaged in a spiritual battle. As Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 we are to arm ourselves with truth and stand strong.

#### D. WATCH OUT FOR TEMPTATION.

Jesus said in Mark 14:38, **“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** We easily fall to temptation when we are spiritually sleepy. When our spiritual eyes are shut we don't even see it coming. If King David had been praying on the rooftop instead of leering at a woman bathing he probably would not have committed adultery and murder and suffered the terrible consequences.

How many times have you walked away from some spiritual battle, completely beaten ... not by the enemy ... but by yourself? No wonder the Bible says, **“Watch yourself!”** If we can just keep from destroying our walk with the Lord,

we're well on the way to becoming the men God wants us to be. But frankly, the temptation is around us everywhere. Like no generation before us, temptation hits us from every angle. From billboards on the highways, to pop-up ads and unsolicited e-mails on the computer, to off-color jokes told around the workplace, to open invitations to practice unethical bookkeeping ... you name it, and a man has to face it. And he doesn't have to face these temptations just once in a while ... but often many times every day.

So here's the question of the day: What are you going to do to watch yourself? In his book *Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation*, Bruce Wilkerson asks men to analyze their weaknesses. When is a man at his weakest? Maybe it's Friday night where he takes off the work clothes, lets down his guard ... and often, gives in to something he knows is wrong. Bruce says: "Do something different on Friday nights!" Maybe it's in front of his computer when no one else is watching. "Get away from that computer. Make sure someone else is there in the room when you're online." Maybe it's the lunch hour, and there's a woman who's getting a little too close and you know it. Bruce says, "Go somewhere else for lunch. Work at your desk. Call your wife, and go on a lunch date. Tell someone. Get accountable."

Know what all of that would be? It's watching yourself. It's setting up a guard against the greatest enemy you may well have ... and that's yourself.

#### E. WATCH OUT FOR FALSE TEACHERS.

2 Peter 2:1 says, "**But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.**"

2 Timothy 4:3-5 says, "**For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**"

Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29-30, "**For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.**"

We live in the full revelation of these prophecies. There are false teachers inside and outside of churches. On the outside are secularists bent on destroying our confidence in the Scripture. Within the church there are many who jettison biblical truth and tickle ears in order to gain popularity and influence. Be watchful of all of them. Test everything by the Scripture.

#### F. WATCH OUT FOR APATHY.

Above all, watch for apathy, that absence of passion for the **Lord in your life. Don't slip into spiritual slumber. 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8 says, "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us**

**who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation."**

Maybe you recognize that apathy in your life now. If so, repent, confess and wake up! Ephesians 5:14-15 says, **"Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."**

## **II. Be Steadfast (v.13b).**

We are to **"watch."** You didn't know I could preach for twenty minutes on one word did you? Ha!

Beyond that we are to **"stand fast in the faith."** Standing fast mean to be firm, not wavering, not changing. This is a word-picture common in Paul's writings. For example, he wrote in Philippians 4:1, **"Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved."** In 1 Thessalonians 3:8 he said, **"For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord."** 2 Thessalonians 2:15 says, **"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle."**

Yet here we are told to **"stand fast in the faith."** What does Paul mean by **"in the faith?"** This faith is the body of biblical truth, the apostolic doctrine by which we are saved and kept. Jude 3 says, **"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."** Paul says much the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:1, **"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand."** Philippians 1:27 says, **"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."**

I know there are areas where sincere believers differ in their understanding of scripture. We might change our minds over the finer points of prophecy. We might have a difference of opinion as to what is appropriate or inappropriate in worship, but there are truths on which we must plant our flag and be willing to die for as thousands already have.

We are to **"stand fast"** in on the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, that salvation is by grace through faith and only through the Lord Jesus Christ. On these and other weighty issues there can be no compromise and no retreat.

How can we **"stand fast in the faith?"** There is only way. We must be anchored in the Word of God. What is the main scripture for our VBS? Romans 10:17, **"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** We must be like the early church which according to Acts 2:42 **"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine..."** Why are we so intent on emphasizing Scripture at New Covenant Baptist Church? Because it is the only way we can stand firm in the faith.

## **III. Be Brave (v.13c).**

Paul tells us that to grow in Christ we must “**watch**,” “**stand fast in the faith**” and also “**be brave**.” It is interesting to me that the NKJV translators chose the words “**be brave**.” The KJV says “**quit you like men**.” Other good translations say “**act like men**.” This comes from *andrizo* and literally means “to play the man” or act manly.

How many of you men remember when you were little boys and you would “play the man”? When boys play they usually pretend to be men. I remember playing fireman, or policeman, or soldier, or hunter, or cowboy. Little boys try to emulate the men around them. They want to be tough, brave and strong men.

That’s what this word is getting at. We are to be unsatisfied with spiritual immaturity. We are to look to our examples and emulate them. We must grow up in the Lord. The NKJV’s translation “**be brave**” understands that meaning. What is it that boys admire in men? Is it not their courage and strength? We need to quit whining like kids and act like adults.

Many of the believers in Corinth were acting like children. He said to them in 14:20, “**Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.**” Listen to his rebuke in 3:1-2, “**And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able.**” In 4:21, he scolds them and threatens them like a father would speak to his children, “**What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?**”

Don’t be satisfied to fill a pew but remain a spiritual infant. Crave spiritual growth. 2 Peter 3:18 says, “**but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

#### **IV. Be Strengthened (v.13d).**

A father had three very active boys. One summer evening, he was playing cops and robbers with them in the back yard after dinner.

One of the boys pointed his finger at his father and yelled, “Bang! You’re dead!” Dad slumped to the ground and when he didn’t get up right away, a neighbor ran over to see if he had been hurt in the fall. When the neighbor bent over, the overworked father opened one eye and said, “Shhh. Don’t give me away. It’s the only chance I’ve had to rest all day.”

Well, fatherhood can be tiring! We need some strength to be men. The next command here is very helpful in that, “**be strong**,” but literally it reads, “**be strengthened**.”

Paul’s word for “**strong**” here is used elsewhere in the New Testament to refer to inner strength. For example, Luke 1:80 says of the boy John the Baptist, “**So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.**” Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus, “**that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man**” (Eph.3:16).

So we are talking about inner spiritual strength. A person might be weak of body but strong of spirit. Ephesians 6:10 says, “**Finally, my brethren, be strong in**

**the Lord and in the power of His might.” 2 Timothy 2:1 says, “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”**

What this verse literally says is **“be strengthened.”** You cannot simply **“be strengthened”** by yourself. We cannot add to our spiritual strength on our own. On the contrary, the Lord must strengthen us. Yet how does the Lord strengthen us? He makes us stronger the more we rely on Him.

The way up is to go down. The way to be strong in the Lord is not to depend on the weak flesh. James 4:8-10 says, **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”** 1 Peter 5:6-7 says, **“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”**

There is a subtle danger for the growing Christian that he may become proud of his own spiritual progress. As he gains greater familiarity with the Word of God he may be tempted to show off. He may speak when he should listen. He may unconsciously develop his own form of Pharisaism. I see this often in believers who champion the doctrines of grace. It amazes me that one can feel proud about receiving grace! On the contrary, those who do have an understanding of God’s grace should be the most humble of men!

## **V. Be Loving (v.14).**

We must be watchful, steadfast, brave, strong, and last we must be loving. Paul says in verse 14, **“Let all that you do be done with love.”**

John MacArthur writes, **“Love complements and balances everything else. It is the beautiful, softening principle. It keeps our firmness from becoming hardness and our strength from becoming domineering. It keeps our maturity gentle and considerate. It keeps our right doctrine from becoming obstinate dogmatism and our right living from becoming smug self-righteousness.”**<sup>1</sup>

Without love, nothing else matters. 1 Peter 4:8 says, **“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.”** 1 John 4:7 says, **“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”**

Love is the way we connect faith with life. Nothing is more important than loving God and loving others.