

CULTIVATING A DYNAMIC MINISTRY

Encouraging Essentials for a Dynamic Ministry

1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:13–14

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Among the last words that the apostle Paul spoke to the leaders of the church at Ephesus was a warning about false teachers who slip into the church and “distort the truth in order to draw a following” (Acts 20:30). “Watch out!” Paul said with deep concern (20:31).

As the years passed, the leaders did well to guard the church against apostolic impostors and their heresies. The Ephesians did not “tolerate evil people” and worked hard to examine “the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not” (Revelation 2:2).

And yet, while watching for the jagged rocks of doctrinal error, the church drifted into treacherous shallows: *religion without love*. “You don’t love me or each other as you did at first!” Jesus told the church at Ephesus through John’s vision (2:4). Somehow, the church lost its spiritual passion from its early days. Without love for Christ and others to give it momentum and dynamic energy, the Ephesian church sank into perfunctory religious duty.

Whether jagged rocks of heresy or treacherous shallows of loveless religion, dangers lurk below the surface for any church. How can we keep our churches on course and guard against that silent, slow, subtle drift into dangerous waters? Thankfully, Paul offers four guiding beacons—*four essentials for sustaining a dynamic ministry*.

Quotable

If we hope to sustain the dynamic ministry that God has allowed us to begin, we must be steadfast, immovable, abounding, and confident.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Read 1 Corinthians 15:58 in the following versions. Look for the action words in each verse, and in the chart following, record the words that you find.



Helpful Hint

Reading different Bible versions can help you to see the same passage with fresh perspective. If you don't have different versions handy, there are plenty of Web sites that can help you, such as BibleGateway.com.

So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless. (1 Corinthians 15:58 NLT)

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. (15:58 NASB)

With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort. (15:58 MSG)

New Living Translation (NLT)	New American Standard Bible (NASB)	The Message (MSG)



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Observation is an important *Searching the Scriptures* technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. As Chuck Swindoll observed the action words in these Bible versions, four key concepts emerged: *steadfast, immovable, abounding, and confident*.

Now, let's do the same exercise with 1 Corinthians 16:13. Read this verse in the same three versions. Observe the commands in each verse, and in the chart below, record the words that you find.

Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. (1 Corinthians 16:13 NLT)

Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. (16:13 NASB)

Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, give it all you've got, be resolute. (16:13 MSG)

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As you compare these versions side-by-side, what observations can you make about the nuances of these commands?



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Can you observe an interesting link between these commands and Paul's key words from 1 Corinthians 15:58? Chuck combined the concepts in these verses to form essentials for sustaining a dynamic ministry. In his message, he distilled his conclusions:

Part of being *steadfast* includes *being on the alert*. By remaining *immovable*, we *stand firm* in the faith. As we *abound* in the Lord's work we are *growing toward maturity*. And fourth, being *confident* that our toil is never in vain, we *become strong* in our everyday walk.

Let's uncover the *interpretation* of each set of concepts from 1 Corinthians 15:58 and 16:13. Chuck Swindoll explains:

Interpretation is learning what the Bible means. Each verse of Scripture means something, and when one verse is tied together with other verses, there's an even deeper meaning.¹

Steadfast . . . Be on the Alert

A steadfast church is steady and reliable, solidly committed to the eternal truths of Holy Scripture. Steadfast churches don't just happen; the people from the pulpit to the pew must be on the alert, always vigilant to keep a steady course.

According to Ephesians 4:14, what do steadfast churches avoid?

Earlier, we touched on Paul's address to the Ephesian leaders. Read more of his address in Acts 20:28–32 in which Paul fills out the *meaning* of *steadfast*. What must leaders do specifically so that their church remains steadfast?



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Immovable . . . Firm in the Faith

The Greek word translated *immovable* reflects the idea of being tightly secured, anchored to the principles of the faith so that when a storm of controversy washes over the decks, the church remains stable. Churches that are immovable are calm in crisis. “Blessed is a man [and church] who *perseveres* under trial” (James 1:12 NASB, emphasis added).

What might happen to a church that doesn’t persevere through trial? How might the church “move” or shift in its convictions regarding the following issues:

Doctrine: _____

Finances: _____

Moral purity: _____

Ethical integrity: _____

What must leaders do specifically so that their church remains immovable?

Abounding . . . Growing toward Maturity

According to Chuck Swindoll, “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58 NASB) means, “Always enthusiastic. Going the extra mile. Keeping a positive attitude. Thinking and often saying yes to opportunities.” It includes a “sense of contagious joy,” Chuck adds. “I don’t think there is a more beautiful sound in a church than laughter.”

An “abounding” church is a maturing church—a church that is growing out of childishness into adulthood. Its members stay positive even when they don’t get their way; they serve enthusiastically and selflessly rather than become irritable and demanding; they don’t quit at the first sign of difficulty; they maintain their sense of humor and remain flexible through seasons of change.



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What must leaders do specifically so that their church remains abounding?

Confident . . . Become Strong

Confident that “nothing [we] do for the Lord is ever useless,” we feel stronger and more motivated to serve Him (1 Corinthians 15:58).

What meaning does Hebrews 6:10 add?

Nothing we do for the Lord is in vain! Let that thought permeate your thinking as you serve Him through your church. As we bring this study home to where you live, let’s close with a fifth essential that fastens around the others like a cord—the absolute essential of love.

Do *everything* with love. (1 Corinthians 16:14, emphasis added)

Bring It Home

Read a few lines from 1 Corinthians 13, imagining each member of your church obeying Paul’s admonition to do everything in love—just as these verses describe:

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)



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As you think about your role in your church, what are some steps you can take to put into practice any of the principles from this study?

Let's close by praying for your church that it will embody these essentials of a dynamic ministry: steadfast, immovable, abounding, and confident . . . with love.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I pray for the leaders of my church who have such a significant role, that they will be steadfast, immovable, abounding, and confident—with love—as they guide the people. And may You strengthen and preserve my church's ministry for many years to come. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2016), 71.



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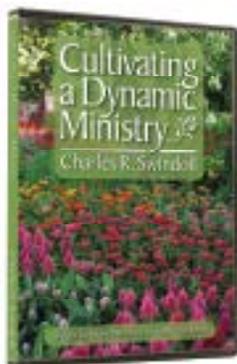
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Excellence in Ministry: Starting Strong—Doing What's Right in the Work of Ministry—A Study of 1 Timothy 1–3
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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