



What We Learn from an Apostle's Ministry Plans (1 Corinthians 16:5-12)

- As Paul begins to conclude his letter, he shares what appears to be some odds and ends about his ministry hopes, plans and fellow workers. We can learn much from observing how faithful and gifted leaders like Paul carry out their ministry. Paul's ministry plans teach us how we can more effectively perform our ministry.
- We can learn from Paul's ministry plans at least five ways we can be a better ministry worker for the Lord.

① We learn about future ministry planning (16:5)

- Since ministry demands one's time, attention, and energy, it is easy to become consumed with the needs of the moment and fail to think ahead about ways to move ministry ahead. Paul shares his future hopes and plans for ministry in Macedonia and in Corinth and beyond.
- Paul's goal, strategy, and plan in ministry was to take the gospel where Christ had not been named (Romans 15:20). He could focus appropriately on the ministry of the moment while also looking forward to what yet needed to be accomplished in other places.
- Our Lord is a planner and uses His future plans to motivate faithful ministry in our current context and to consider future needs yet to be met (1 Cor. 15:58).

② We learn about flexible ministry living (16:6-7)

- One of the great lessons we learn from Paul is about the need to be flexible in ministry and avoid unnecessary frustration. He had his plans and expectations (v. 5-6: ministry in Macedonia, then Corinth), but he also knew those plans could change as circumstances and people shift (2 Cor. 2:12-13 Paul's original plan was to travel through Macedonia and then come to Corinth, but circumstances demanded he come to Corinth first, then head to Macedonia and then return to Corinth again (2 Cor 2:12-13; 7:5; 8:1; 9:4; Acts 19:21; 20:1-3)
- Paul uses the words "*perhaps*", "*wherever*", and "*if the Lord wills*" to indicate the need for flexibility in his plans. It is God's plan, not ours that matters and while He wants us to plan, prepare, and strategize, we must trust His will and direction (Prov. 16:9).

③ We learn about fruitful ministry opportunities (16:8-9a)

- Paul says he plans to stay in Ephesus (v. 8) because "*a wide door for effective service has opened to him*" (v. 9a). Paul still wants to go to Corinth, but the Lord is keeping the "*door*" of ministry "*wide*" open and "*effective*" in Ephesus, and he doesn't want to miss or lose that divine opportunity.
- God is the God of open and closed doors (Rev. 3:7-8), so we can look for those divine moments of opportunity.

④ We learn about foe ministry awareness (16:9b)

- Paul teaches us that with all open doors, there will be foes he calls "*adversaries*" who resist and oppose our ministry work.

- As believers, we have three major foes we must constantly be aware of as believers: the world system of evil (1 John 2:15), the of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-17), and Satan and his demonic spirits (Eph. 6:10-12). Gospel ministry always meets with resistance because it threatens and topples the idols and pride of the human heart.
- Paul says those “*adversaries*” will be “*many*” and perpetual (he uses the present tense), so we must be on the lookout for Satan’s schemes (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet.5:8-9a). He loves to use deception, division, and doubt to create chaos and oppose God’s ministry work.

⑤ We learn about fellow ministry care (16:10-12)

- Paul had a big heart for people and he mentions his heart for Timothy and Apollos in their ministry with the Corinthians. Ministry is not accomplished in isolation, but in shared community together.
- Paul calls himself a “*fellow-worker*” and wrote things like “*strive together for the faith of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:27).
- Timothy would be delivering the Corinthian letter (1 Cor. 4:17) and Paul wanted him to be treated lovingly and respectfully (v. 10-11). Apollos was loved by the Corinthians and Paul encouraged him to come to Corinth even though it wouldn’t be until he had the opportunity (v. 12).