

## STACCATO

**Scripture Reading:** Read 1 Corinthians 16



Staccato! If you ever have played an instrument in a band or orchestra, then you are probably familiar with the Italian musical term, “staccato.” It’s indicated by a dot over or under a note. The term means separated or detached. One music teacher I had compared staccato to the game of “Hot Potato.” You don’t hold on to the note but release it the instant it is played.

In today’s chapter reading, Paul is winding down his first letter to the church at Corinth. He has addressed their multiple problems. He has answered their theological questions. He has affirmed his love. He has disciplined his wayward children. He has pastored them forward towards maturity. All that is left now is to make a few closing comments, give a series of greetings and finish with a benediction.

Before he does, though, he jumps into a series of staccato commands. They don’t flow out of deep theological discussions or come with extended introductions. They’re just a quick series of commands...staccato style. Pop, pop, pop, they flow from Paul to the Corinthian church: “*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.*” Staccato commands but packed with meaning.

1. **Be on your guard** – Literally, “Be watchful.” It’s the same term used in Matthew 24:42 about being watchful regarding the Lord’s coming. We are called to live our lives in light of Christ’s return so as not to be caught up unduly in the cares of life.
2. **Stand firm in the faith** – Given the tendency to false teaching that existed at Corinth, the church was challenged to remain faithful to the truth.
3. **Be men of courage** – The church was called to “man up” and take a stand in the midst of a pagan culture. They were to quit compromising and abusing grace as a way of avoiding persecution and be courageous for Christ instead.
4. **Be strong** – Such a stand required the believers to be strong. Caving in, whimpering about the difficulties and trials, or compromising was not going to get the job done. They needed to be strong in the Lord.
5. **Do everything in love** – Given the Corinthians’ tendency to misunderstand Paul and get out of balance (Can’t you hear the Corinthians pounding on their chests, screaming “man chants” and taking on everyone around them after the first four commands?), Paul needed to remind them one more time about the importance of love. It is both truth and love that counts. Everything had to flow out of love from God, love for God and love for others.

**Action Step & Prayer Focus:** Paul’s staccato commands aren’t just for Corinth. The church of every century needs to hear, heed and obey them. Go back through the list and ask the Lord to show you which one(s) he wants to work on in your life this week.

**Take-a-way:** *Although short in length, staccato commands are long in importance.*