

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MAY 14TH - 15TH, 2022 // BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

EARNESTLY DESIRE THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5)

After Paul declared **the importance of love** in chapter 13, he now returns to his discussion of the spiritual gifts he started in chapter 12.

- Chapter 13 isn't a digression or an aside- Paul's point is that **the character of our worship and the practice of the spiritual gifts MUST** be guided by love.
- Love is what we are to **pursue in everything** we do as a follower of Jesus (vs. 1a).

There's nothing wrong with **earnestly desiring spiritual gifts** (1b)- it's just that our main pursuit in worship should be love.

- Our use of the gifts should **display our love for the Lord** and our love for others in the church.
- In the Corinthian church, it seems like there was an **over-emphasis on tongues** and an under-emphasis on other gifts. Paul wants to correct **this wrong prioritization**.

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

Acts 2:6-12 (actual language for evangelism), 1 Corinthians 14:2, 1 Corinthians 13:1 (heavenly language for personal prayer).

- The gift of tongues is the Holy Spirit giving the supernatural ability to speak in an **unknown tongue** that one has no knowledge or ability to speak on their own.
- Not everyone is **given this gift** (1 Corinthians 12:30), this ability isn't the evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit (the **"fruit"** is), and this might have a **large role** in the devotional life of the believer, but a **small role** in the corporate life of the church.

With the gift of tongues as a **"heavenly language,"** the speaker isn't talking to other people but to God (vs. 2).

- People can't understand the **"mysteries in the Spirit"** someone is uttering, but God can.
- So, **emphasizing the gift of tongues in a worship service** at the exclusion of a gift like teaching or prophecy (**which can be understood**) is unloving and unhelpful.

The Greek word used for prophecy is defined as **"the gift of communicating and enforcing revealed truth."**

- Prophecy is when God reveals something to someone that is **intended to share for the purpose of communicating truth**.
- In contrast to the gift of tongues, **the gift of prophecy** is directed towards others in the church for their upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation (vs. 3).

The gift of tongues, however, is **primarily for the one speaking** in order to build them up (vs. 4).

- Prophecy builds up the church, but **tongues is for the speaker's personal benefit**.
- Paul isn't discouraging anyone from **using the gift of tongues** (vs. 5)- this gift enables someone to pray, praise, and intercede beyond their ability to understand and articulate.
- Paul wanted **every Christian** to have this blessing.

But even better is **the gift of prophecy** because it's given for the building up of the church.

- This God-given, Spirit-empowered ability to **speak truth and revelation from the Lord** should take precedence over the gift of tongues.

How does "the gift of prophecy" operate in the church?

- In tandem with a **teaching/preaching** gift.
- During **times of prayer** between believers.
- As words of "upbuilding, encouragement, & consolation" (**filtered through pastoral authority and oversight**)

BUILDING UP THE CHURCH (1 CORINTHIANS 14:6-12)

The problem for **the Corinthian church wasn't the gift of tongues itself** - it was the fact that they were using tongues as a platform for pride and a **sign of spiritual superiority**.

- Paul, the apostle, **spoke in tongues** (vs. 18), but in his ministry, **he spoke so that all could profit** through "revelation, knowledge, prophecy, or teaching" (vs. 6).
- His gifts were used to **build up the church**.

Paul used his spiritual gifts **not to impress people with how spiritual he was** but to help them grow in Christ out of a heart of love.

- Musical instruments use a certain pitch and beat to **communicate a song** or piece of music.
- If you just pick one up and blow on or strum it- it's **just noise with no purpose** (vs. 7-8).
- Speaking in tongues in a **loud and distracting way at a worship service** is kind of like that.

It's just noise with **no real purpose behind it**- it only benefits the speaker, but it doesn't upbuild, encourage, or **console others within the church**.

- Uttering speech that is not intelligible is just "speaking into the air" because **no one else besides God knows what the speaker is saying** (vs. 9).
- However, this doesn't mean the gift of tongues is **pointless or meaningless** to its speaker. Tongues is a supernatural form of communication between that **person and God**.

There are different languages in the world, but if **we want to communicate with each other**, we must speak the same language so we can understand (vs. 10).

- But if I'm speaking **Chinese and you only speak English** (vs. 11), it doesn't matter the words I'm saying - you can't understand me.
- When we speak in tongues, God understands, **even if no-one else does**.

Because of this, **the priority in the worship gathering should not be the gift of tongues** - but rather gifts that excel in building up the church (vs. 12).

If the gift of tongues is to be practiced in a worship gathering, it is to be done using certain guidelines.

1. There must be an **interpretation** (vs. 26).
2. It must be done **one at a time** (vs. 27).

3. Only **2 messages** in tongues, at the most 3 (vs. 27)
4. If no one present in **the worship gathering has the gift of interpretation of tongues**, that person is to remain silent (vs. 28).
5. That person can speak to themselves and God in their tongue, but **the practice of this gift must be silent** and not distracting to others (vs. 28).
 - Why? Because the church gathering is for the **"building up of the church!"** Not to show off how spiritual we are in front of each other.

THINKING OF OTHERS (1 CORINTHIANS 14:13-20)

Because the **essential function of the gift of tongues is communication to God** and not to others, someone who speaks in tongues should pray for the interpretation (vs. 13).

- In praying in an unknown tongue, it's **the spirit that's praying and communicating with God**, not the mind (vs. 14).
- Singing and praying in the spirit may encourage our inner being, but it doesn't **build up our minds**.

Some of us are more **naturally cerebral, intellectual, and analytical** - we struggle with the idea of our faith being experiential.

- Some of us are more **naturally emotional, sensitive, and empathetic** - we struggle with the idea of our faith being **intellectual**.
- But our faith is **BOTH** - we're called to worship **"in spirit and in truth"** (John 4:24). If we have one without the other, we're imbalanced.

Paul's call for balance is found in vs. 15 - **pray in the spirit, but pray with the mind also**; sing praise in the spirit, **but sing praise with the mind also**.

- Given the context of what we will read later in the chapter, it safe to conclude that the gift of tongues primarily is to be used in **private devotional life**.
- Otherwise, how does it benefit anyone within the church **if they don't even understand what we're saying?** (vs. 16)

Even if someone **praying in a tongue publicly is truly giving thanks to God**, the other people in the church aren't being built up (vs. 17).

- When we're gathered together with other believers, **we can't just do our own thing** and say, "well, it blesses me!"
- We must be willing to **consider others** and think of how our worship, prayer, and practice of the gifts is **helping them see Jesus**.

The naysayers in the Corinthian church at this point in the **letter might be thinking**, "Paul is only saying this about tongues because he isn't spiritual and doesn't have this gift like we do."

- But Paul did have this gift, and apparently, he saw a **tremendous value in it for his own devotional life before the Lord** (vs. 18).
- Paul had two spiritual traits these believers lacked - **maturity and humility**.

Paul had **maturity** - he understood that when he gathered with other Christians, his concern was that he was a blessing to them and used the gifts that **built up the church** (vs. 19-20).

- Paul had **humility** - he understood that tongues weren't given to be used a platform for **spiritual pride** or a sign of **spiritual superiority**.
- Our main pursuit in worship should be love, even as **we earnestly desire spiritual gifts**.

THE BIG QUESTION IS, "WHY?"

- If there's a **spiritual gift I don't have** that I'm earnestly desiring, **why am I desiring that gift?**
- If there's a **spiritual gift I do have** that I want to use publicly, **why do I want to use it?**
- Is it because I want others to see me as **spiritually superior?** Is it because I want a platform for my **spiritual pride?** Is it because I want to be seen as **important?** Is it because I want a feeling or **experience more than I want God Himself?**

FOUR SPIRITUAL TRAITS

1. **Love.**
 - Our use of any spiritual gift should **always display our love for the Lord** and our love for others within the church.
 - If we don't have **genuine love in our hearts, it doesn't matter how much we know** or what we're able to do- we know nothing and have nothing of true spiritual value (13:2-3).
2. **Balance.**
 - If we're naturally **more intellectual**, our judgmental attitude towards other Christians, who are wired different from us as **"theatrical"** is wrong.
 - If we're naturally **more emotional**, our judgmental attitude towards other Christians, who are wired different from us as **"unspiritual,"** is also wrong.
 - We're to worship in **"spirit AND in truth"** (John 4:24)- how are we growing in both areas?
3. **Maturity.**
 - When we gather as the church, is **your concern how you can be a blessing** or how others can bless you?
 - In using your gifts - are you thinking about how your gift can help and **bless someone else** or how people will compliment, praise, or applaud you?
4. **Humility.**
 - Real **maturity is selflessness**.
 - Whatever spiritual gift we have - tongues, teaching, prophecy, faith, miracles, etc.- it **wasn't given to be used as a platform for spiritual pride** or a sign of spiritual superiority.
 - God gave us that **gift to glorify Jesus** and build up the church.
 - **"IT'S NOT ABOUT ME..."**