

THE BODY OF CHRIST

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND WORSHIP

Today's Passage: 1 Corinthians 14:1-40

For the week of August 17th

MAIN POINT

Our spiritual gifts and public worship must glorify God and help others grow toward Christlikeness.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

Use these questions to start discussion and learn more about others in your Life Group.

What is something you are really good at? This might be a talent, ability, technical skill, or other gifting. Share with the group. Have you ever used this gift to help someone else? What was that like?

Do you think most people see their talents as primarily being for themselves or as a chance to help and serve others?

Within a group of people of any size, there are likely many skills and abilities represented both professionally and personally. The church at Corinth was no different. The people possessed many gifts, but some were selfishly exalting their own preferences and the use of certain gifts. This was causing disruption and disorder in their worship. Paul wrote to remind them that their gifts were not primarily for them, but for others. When the church gathers for worship, the purpose should always be to exalt God and strengthen all who are present.

**SCAN HERE FOR ADDITIONAL
COMMENTARY ON TODAY'S LESSON**



GROW TOGETHER

What comes to mind when you think about spiritual gifts like prophecy and speaking and interpreting tongues?

Are your thoughts on these gifts based on experience, religious tradition, second-hand stories, or Scripture?

There are a variety of opinions on the use and practice of “charismatic” gifts. The people in the church at Corinth continued to struggle with practicing spiritual gifts, particularly the more sensational gifts of prophecy and tongues. Paul wrote to help them see the real purpose of these gifts. For Paul, the bottom line is the use of spiritual gifts must be joined with love and the purpose of building the church for the glory of God.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-12 (ESV).

14:1 *“Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up. 6 Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? 7 If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? 8 And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? 9 So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, 11 but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. 12 So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.*

Why does Paul say prophecy is superior to tongues? What is the purpose of both of these gifts? How were both of these gifts used to build the church?

In verses 6-11, Paul provides a series of metaphors to explain the use of tongues in the church. What are they and how do they help you understand this gift?

Why should tongues always be interpreted? What happens if they are not?

Even though the Corinthians were misusing the gifts, Paul did not suggest they quit using them entirely. Rather he encouraged them to eagerly desire the gifts. However, Paul did provide some helpful direction and boundaries for the Corinthians. For Paul, prophecy was preferable because it builds others up. Tongues, when not interpreted, only strengthen the individual. Paul commended the Corinthians for seeking these manifestations of the Spirit, but reminded them that public worship is not about them and their preferences. Living for the greater cause means focusing on helping others grow.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:13-25 (ESV).

14:13 *"Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. 16 Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue."*

20 “Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. **21** In the Law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” **22** Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. **23** If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? **24** But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, **25** the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”

Among the Corinthians’ problems was their desire to selfishly use unexplained tongues in their worship gatherings. Whereas prophecy communicates a clear message to all who listen, tongues provide a message that is only understood by the speaker. Paul offered them strong words to get them to see the effect their self-centered worship had on outsiders.

Paul referred to the Corinthians as children. What did the Corinthians’ insistence on speaking in tongues with no interpretation reveal about their maturity?

What did Paul mean when he said tongues are for unbelievers, but prophecy is for believers?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 (ESV).

14:26 “What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. **27** If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. **28** But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. **29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. **30** If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. **31** For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, **32** and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. **33** For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

*"As in all the churches of the saints, **34** the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. **35** If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*

***36** Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? **37** If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. **38** If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. **39** So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. **40** But all things should be done decently and in order.*

Have you ever attended an event that was completely disordered? What effect did that have on you as a guest?

Paul's directions that only a few people speak in a worship service may seem limiting to us, but why would he seek to restrict the number of people exercising their gifts in a single service?

How should we understand Paul's comments about women? How does chapter 11 help us understand this section?

Paul opens this section with the words, "What then shall we say?" Or in other words: "Here are some practical takeaways." Spiritual gifts should exalt God and help others grow. Worship that is not ordered, where everyone does what seems good to them, does not honor God and does not help anyone. Our worship reflects the One we worship and God is not a God of disorder or confusion, but of peace.

MAKE AN IMPACT

Discover how you can apply today's lesson to your life so you can impact the world.

Think about your own spiritual gifts. Do you use them in a way that honors God? How could you use your own gifts to better help others grow?

In what ways can you encourage your spouse, your children, or other brothers and sisters in Christ to use their own gifts?