

Student Guide – 1 Corinthians 14: Truths Regarding Tongues

Student Guide Church Talk – Exploring 1 Corinthians 14 – Understanding Tongues

Purpose of This Guide This guide is designed to help students engage with Paul’s teaching on spiritual gifts, particularly tongues, and to reflect on how these gifts should operate within the local church.

INTRODUCTION

Key Idea: 1 Corinthians 14 is central for grasping Paul’s perspective on spiritual gifts. Studying chapters 12 through 14 together gives a complete view of their purpose and function.

Reflection: Why do you think Paul highlights love in the middle of his discussion on spiritual gifts?

REVIEW: THE FUNCTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Main Truth: Spiritual gifts are given to strengthen and serve the church, not for personal pride or display.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:29–31

Discussion Questions: • How does Paul illustrate the variety of gifts in the church? • Why is it important that not everyone has the same gift?

THE GREATER WAY: LOVE

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:8–10

Key Points: • Spiritual gifts are temporary • Love is permanent • Gifts remain until “the perfect” arrives

Reflection: How does love influence the way gifts should be expressed in the church?

CHAPTER 14: TONGUES AND PROPHECY

Key Focus: Paul emphasizes love as the foundation, then contrasts tongues and prophecy.

Important Distinction: • Tongues for personal growth • Tongues with interpretation for the edification of the church

Why This Matters: Confusing these two functions can lead to misunderstanding the purpose of speaking in tongues.

I. CORPORATE EDIFICATION FIRST

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:1–4

Main Idea: Public worship should focus on what benefits the entire congregation.

Three Functions of Prophecy:

1. Upbuilding – strengthening the church body
2. Encouragement – guiding believers into God’s purpose
3. Consolation – comforting and reassuring the congregation

Reflection: Why might Paul prioritize prophecy over un-interpreted tongues in public gatherings?

II. PERSONAL EDIFICATION IS ESSENTIAL

Main Truth: Private edification remains important, even when the focus is on public worship.

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:2, 4–5 Romans 8:26

Key Points: • Tongues are directed toward God in prayer • They strengthen the individual believer • Paul encouraged all believers to speak in tongues

Reflection: How does personal prayer in tongues help a believer grow spiritually?

TONGUES AND INTERPRETATION

Key Insight: Tongues and interpreted tongues serve different purposes.

Biblical Examples: • Acts 2 – no interpreter needed • Acts 10 – Spirit fell on Gentiles • Acts 19 – believers spoke in tongues and prophesied

Discussion: What do these examples teach about the role of interpretation in tongues?

SPIRIT AND UNDERSTANDING TOGETHER

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:13–15

Key Truth: Prayer and worship should involve both the Spirit and the mind.

Application: How can you engage both your spirit and understanding in prayer and worship?

III. THINKING OF THE UNBELIEVER

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:16–19

Main Idea: Mature believers consider the impact of their worship on outsiders.

Reflection: How should a church balance personal spiritual experience with accessibility for those who are not yet believers?

TONGUES AS A SIGN

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:20–25 Isaiah 28:11–13

Key Insight: • Tongues serve as a sign to unbelievers • Prophecy serves as a sign to believers

Think About It: How does understanding Isaiah 28 clarify Paul's teaching on the purpose of tongues?

THE OUTCOME OF SPIRIT-FILLED WORSHIP

Results: • Conviction • Accountability • Awareness of sin • Repentance

Reflection: Why are these outcomes more important than personal expression in public worship?

FINAL INSTRUCTION

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:39–40

Key Takeaways: • Desire prophecy • Do not forbid speaking in tongues • Worship should be orderly and considerate

Personal Application: How can you pursue spiritual gifts while maintaining love, order, and humility in the church setting?