

The Orderly Use of Spiritual Gifts

1 Corinthians 14:1–40 (ESV)

[LOVE OFFERING FOR JESUS - Envelopes]

CONTEXT: Let's review - so far in 1 Corinthians we have been studying Paul's response to the questions raised by messengers of a prominent lady named Chloe's. At this point Paul has addressed:

- The influence of worldly ideologies
- The proper way to address unrepentant sin in the church
- Lawsuits among believers
- Married and Divorce
- Addictions
- Issues of Conscience
- The Role of Ladies in the Church
- Communion
- And for the last three chapters Paul has taught in detail about Spiritual Gifts. Specifically, he has addressed the gifts of tongues in great detail.

Now how many of you have in your entire life heard a sermon on tongues before coming to this church? Very few, but Paul has taught on it in great detail here in 1st Corinthians.

There are two ways to approach the text of scripture:

1. Deciding for myself what is important and searching the text for passages that I believe are relevant.
2. OR - I can allow the text to instruct me as to what is important.

- The first approach *assumes* **YOU** have the proper perspective and it places you above the text to a certain degree as a **CRITIC**.
- The second approach *assumes* **GOD** has the proper perspective and it places the Bible above you as a **COACH**.

We have adopted the second approach here at this church. Thus, if there is more said about Spiritual Gifts in 1 Corinthians than any other subject, we assume that they are important. You see?

Could it be that something significant is missing from your life and Christian experience simply because you are what Paul described in chapter 12, "uninformed brethren"?

Vance Havner said, that is the biggest denomination in the world, the "Uninformed Brethren"

Could it be that you are struggling needlessly with some area of your life simply because you do not comprehend the place of spiritual gifts?

ILLUSTRATION: Last week a brother in our Church was struggling with a very important decision for which he had no clear direction. A lady in our church, who did not know him, nor did she know what he was trying to decide gave him a very specific word that spoke directly to the issue, gave him clear direction, and brought peace to his soul.

ILLUSTRATION: I've told you before about when I made public God's call on my life, that my Father advised me that he had received a word from the Lord many years ago that I would be a preacher.

Could it be that God has something significant to say to you through another person? Oh, I forgot, you like to fish on Sunday. Oh well... Those of you who know me, know that I go to great lengths to avoid stacking a ton of legalist rules on you. However, there is a reason we gather for worship each week... there is a reason that we strongly encourage you to GET TO KNOW people in small groups. That is where the majority of spiritual gifts are exercised.

It could be that you lay awake at night begging God to give you an answer and He is saying, honey, there is a sister in a small group at FBC that I'm giving your answer through, but you can't seem to get up on time to be at Church.

So spiritual gifts and their operation are very important. With that in mind, Paul begins to land the plane on gifts in chapter 14. Look at it with me...

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 14:1–40 (ESV)

¹ Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

Just note that it is **ok**, even **encouraged** that you desire spiritual gifts. Have you ever considered that God may give you a gift to meet a need in the church? Have you asked him to?

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.

He begins with a...

1. A Proper Comparison

Remember in the Corinthian Church, they really exalted the gift on tongues above all the other gifts.

It appears in the text that it was standard practice for the church services to sort of, get derailed due to a number of people demanding to demonstrate their ability to speak in tongues. But in the absence of an interpreter, they didn't know what they were saying, neither did anyone else.

Paul doesn't forbid the use of the gift of tongues, but rather he shows that pragmatically it was unhelpful in Corporate Lord's day worship.

Notice how he compares Tongues to Prophecy:

a. Tongues

- ***The Audience is God*** - ² For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God;

So tongues are primarily used as a type of prayer.

- ***The Message is Unknown*** - ^{2b}. for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.

So this person is praying, and no one understands, even the person speaking in tongues doesn't understand.

- ***The Exercise of Tongues has a Positive Effect on the Speaker*** - ⁴ The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself

So, it is possible for this person who is speaking in tongues, even though he or she doesn't know what they are saying, to receive some amount of spiritual benefit.

There are some who have this gift who exercise it in private, that is completely acceptable according to my understanding of the text.

Later, Paul would say, "I speak in tongues more than all of you" and "I wish that you all spoke in tongues".

You can see why, if there is a spiritual benefit attached to it. So, ultimately, Paul is not discouraging the use of the gift. It was a gift, enjoy it. He was simply showing that it wasn't helpful in corporate worship.

b. Prophecy -

- ***The Audience is People*** - ³ On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people.

So Prophecy is not primarily a prayer, but more like a message.

- ***The Message is Known and Helpful in Nature*** - 3b. for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.
- ***The Message Strengthens the Church*** - 4b. the one who prophesies builds up the church.

ILLUSTRATION: We see a great example of the gift of Prophecy in **Acts 21:8–14 (ESV)**

⁸ On the next day we departed and came to Caesarea, and we entered the house of Philip the **evangelist**, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters, who **prophesied**. ¹⁰ While we were staying for many days, a **prophet** named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'This is how the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard this, we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, "Let the will of the Lord be done."

So Paul could prepare for what was coming, the church could prepare. That's how the gift works. It gives very practical guidance.

Paul illustrates with Musical Instruments in 6-12.

Music is a language that everyone can understand. Sure, there are genres and styles, you may prefer some over others, but if an instrument is played well - you will understand what the composer intended.

ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever heard an orchestra warm up? It is a cacophony. Each musician is focused on his or her specific instrument. They are hitting indistinct notes making sure everything is in working order.

But when the conductor raises his BATON, the CACOPHONY is transformed into a SYMPHONY. Symphony simply means SAME NOTES. Sym - Same, Phonas - notes.

When each person in the church uses his or her gift for a common purpose - the CACOPHONY is transformed into a SYMPHONY. It's a beautiful, life giving, experience.

Not only a Proper Comparison... secondly

2. A Potential Cooperation

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.

Notice, Paul is not referring to the HOLY SPIRIT, but rather, MY SPIRIT. This has reference to the emotional self.

Remember when Jesus said, “A day is coming and now is, when those who worship me will worship in SPIRIT and in TRUTH”?

That statement isn’t referring to the HOLY SPIRIT AND TRUTH. But rather, they will worship saturated in biblical truth and deep inward sincerity.

The same thing is in mind in this text...So when a person prays in a tongue, the SPIRIT (the emotional self) prays, but the MIND has no clue what is being said.

15 What am I to do? If it is possible to engage the MIND and the SPIRIT which one should I prefer? Paul says - BOTH!

- **PRAYING** - I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also;

When you pray, your emotions should be engaged.

James 5:16 - The effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much

So prayers should engage the emotions. But they must also be intelligible. Specific prayers get specific answers.

ILLUSTRATION: I was teaching on this once and I challenged our church to stop praying things they did not understand. For example, “Bless the missionaries, bless the food, ect.) But rather, define in what way you wish for God to bless it. As soon as we finished it was time to take up the offering, “the deacon who had to pray said, “Lord, well... thank you”.

- **SINGING** - I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.

Some of the most disobedient people I have ever known could get emotionally worked up in a song service. Why? Their emotions were engaged, but their minds weren’t.

I’ve also known some guys with a Phd who had 100 degrees and no spiritual temperature.

God wants you to THINK when you sing, and FEEL when you sing. Both are vital.

- **THANKSGIVING** - 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.

This week we will all gather around our table and give thanks. Now that should happen at every meal, but it better happen this week.

Brother, give some thought to what you want to say. Consider all that God has given to you and your family. When you say amen, the people around your table can be edified if you do it well.

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.

Not only a Proper Comparison... a Potential Cooperation...

3. A Practical Conclusion

A. Each Gift Has it's Purpose -

- **Tongues are primarily a Sign for Unbelievers**

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,

The main reason God gave the gift of tongues was as a sign for unbelieving Jews.

That is why it was proper and appropriate for it to be used publicly on the day of Pentecost.

Pentecost was a Jewish holy day. Jews from all over the world returned to Jerusalem to worship. When they did, God poured out the Holy Spirit and all of the people spoke in tongues.

Now, in verse 21, Paul is quoting a passage from **Isaiah 28** You see, when Isaiah would prophecy they people would belittle him.

¹⁰ For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”

It was a proverbial mocking. In Hebrew -

Cavla Cav, Cavla Cav,
Savla Sav, Savla Sav,

Zier San, Zier San

Have you ever heard, “yata, yata, yata”? It’s etymology is from an old Scottish phrase that meant - meaningless, incessant chatter.

That’s basically what they were saying when Isaiah preached... Cavla Cav, Cavla Cav,

What did God say? **Isaiah 28:11–12 (ESV)**¹¹ For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue the Lord will speak to this people,

You wanna hear Cavla Cav, Cavla Cav... you will.

CONSIDER THIS:

- In the beginning, after God Judged the world with a flood in Noah’s day. God told them to cover the face of the earth and subdue it... What did mankind do? They built a great tower called, the tower of Babel, less they be scattered over the face of the earth. So what happened, God scattered their languages so they had to separate.
- Well when God Judged Jesus on the cross for our sin, after the resurrection what did God command the church to do? Go into all the world and make disciples. Then what happened? He gathered the language back into one so that everyone heard the Gospel in their own language.

What was the significance? Isaiah’s prophecy - Unbelieving Israel no longer had the mandate as the people of God, for a season, God would build a people from every tribe and tongue.

Israel will return one day, because God always keeps His word.

So tongues is a sign for the Jews.

- **Prophecy is primarily a Sign for Believers**

21b. 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.

B. Church is a Team Sport -

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.

Keep in mind the church at Corinth was smaller, likely 30-40 people. When churches

grew larger, they divided into groups, that is the house to house ministry like we see in Jerusalem. For us, it is Sunday school or groups.

We encourage more dialogue in groups and less monologue, so that people can contribute.

C. Organization is Not Unspiritual

Now keep in mind this is the Lord's day corporate gathering:

- **Instruction for those with the gift of tongues:**

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.

- **Instruction for those with the gift of Prophecy:**

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,

- **Instruction for women:**

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?

So again, since prophecy is a teaching gift, women are not to use this gift in corporate worship.

- **Instruction for Everyone:**

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.

And that is how we know Paul was a baptist, he didn't like church to get out of hand.