

GROW
The Power of Words
1 Corinthians 14

Today, I want to talk about the incredible power of WORDS. One of God's greatest gifts to us is the power of SPEECH. Through words, we communicate love and hope and wisdom and tenderness, and a million other things. Words are one of our greatest TREASURES on this earth. They are also one of our greatest sources of PAIN and CONFUSION. We must learn to handle words with CAUTION, and choose to be like Christ who measured his words carefully and lovingly for the sake of those to whom he spoke.

While there are MANY different messages that I could preach about the power of words, today I want to preach on them out of 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul gives us instructions about HOW GOD USES WORDS in the context of the spiritual gifts. Specifically, we are going to see what Paul says about PROPHECY and TONGUES! This should be FUN! *As we begin to explore this passage together, I want to make it clear that I have often been accused of being a "Bapticoctal!"* CHC is known for this as well! I love having freedom in worship and I believe deeply that the Living God still works miracles in our day and time. Many Charismatic Christ-followers and spiritual leaders have influenced me over the years, and I love what God has taught me through them. However, I am responsible to measure everything that I do by the standard of God's Word to give me proper boundaries and perspectives, so I do not simply accept every practice that my Charismatic brothers engage in. **Personal experience must NEVER trump the authority of God's Word, and I am will have to give account for how I teach and lead you as pastor here at CHC!** Therefore, to start, I want to present a few BIBLICAL BASICS about the spiritual gifts in general.

Spiritual Gifts: Drives, opportunities, and results given by the Holy Spirit to the people of God to enable them to help accomplish God's practical and supernatural goals in this earth.

***MOTIVATIONAL GIFTS:** Serving, Giving, Exhorting, Prophecy, Teaching, Mercy, Administration.

***MINISTRY GIFTS:** Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, Miracles, Healing, Helps, Overseers, Tongues.

***MANIFESTATION GIFTS:** Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Faith, Gifts of Healing, Working of Miracles, Prophecy, Discerning of Spirits, Various Tongues.

We must remember the ORIGIN and DESTINATION of the spiritual gifts:

*They are given by the HOLY SPIRIT

-They are not skills that can be taught, but only gifts that can be received

*They are given to EVERY BELIEVER

-No single gift is given to every believer

-No single believer has every gift **[See 1 Corinthians 12:29-30]**

We must remember the PURPOSE of spiritual gifts:

- *They are given to empower the church to be the hands and feet of Christ on earth
- *They are given to edify, equip, and encourage the church
- *They are given to reach those that are without Christ
- *They are only to be exercised in LOVE! **[Review WHY Paul put 1 Cor. 13 between 12 and 14, and why he focused so much time on tongues and prophecy in 14!]**

Paul wrote 1 Cor. 14 in order to CORRECT some abuses and misuses of the gift of tongues in the church. Many in Corinth were apparently speaking in tongues freely in their gatherings without anyone interpreting what was being said. This resulted in displays of spiritual fervor without anyone understanding what we being said and with only the speaker being somehow benefitted. This resulted in spiritual pride and was clearly out of order!

**The gifts are given for the GLORY of God and the GOOD of OTHERS.
They are given THROUGH YOU . . . not TO YOU!**

1 Corinthians 14:12 NASB

12 So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

1 Corinthians 14:1-6 NASB

1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. 4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying. 6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching?

Paul instructs us to earnestly desire the GREATER GIFTS: [12:31; 14:1, 12]

*The greater gifts are the ones that build up others rather than just one's self. **[Vs. 5]**

*The greater gifts are the ones that express some aspect of PROPHECY:

- Prophecy ALWAYS benefits those who hear it. It is a primary building tool!
- Prophecy is mentioned in every category of gifts.

Prophecy: Uttering words that are impressions from the Holy Spirit that are meant to edify, encourage, or instruct other believers. [Vs. 3]

*NT prophecy is not primarily the act of FORETELLING the future (though it can be that), but of FORTHTELLING the truth.

*Prophecy is NOT EQUAL with inspired scripture **[Thus says the Lord . . .]**

- This is NOT authoritative over another believer, but instructive for him.
- Mature believers must judge prophecies for biblical accuracy **[Vs. 29]**

*This can be expressed through many different spiritual gifts: **Explain these.**
 -Teaching, Revelation, Word of Wisdom/Knowledge, Tongues with interpretation

TONGUES: A Spirit-given ability to speak language that is not your NATIVE tongue as a SIGN and a WITNESS to those that are NOT believers (especially unbelieving Jews).

*This is my PRIMARY definition of tongues based on the clearest TEACHING and the clearest EXAMPLES presented in the New Testament.

Acts 2:4-11 NIV

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs--we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

***Biblical tongues are HUMAN LANGUAGES that are supernaturally spoken.**

***Some see tongues as a PERSONAL PRAYER LANGUAGE, based on Vs. 2, 4, 14.**

-I can see why some may interpret this in this way.

-For some, tongues are a form of talking with God that inspires their soul. **(2, 4)**

NOTE: My understanding of these verses is that this is what the Corinthians were SAYING that tongues were to them.

*It was "their way" of talking to God and it made them FEEL close to God.

*Paul was CORRECTING their self-centered FOCUS in this passage.

*The blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's constant presence bring us close!

-Yet, I have NEVER used my pastoral position to forbid someone from doing this.

-I know that many godly people practice a personal prayer language.

*Yet, I have seen how DIVISIVE much of the teaching on tongues has been.

-I also know that tongues are NOT the sole evidence of being Spirit-filled!

*It must not be talked about as if one is MISSING OUT if they don't do it!

-I also feel that there is a misunderstanding about the MAIN PURPOSE of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:7-19 NASB

7 Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? 8 For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? 9 So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is

clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. 11 If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. 12 So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. 13 Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 **What is the outcome then?** I will pray with the spirit **and** I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit **and** I will sing with the mind also. 16 Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. 18 I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; 19 however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

***Tongues are meant to be firstly a clear form of PROPHETIC COMMUNICATION.**

-ALL language has meaning! **[Vs. 10]**

-If you speak in tongues, pray that God will gift you to INTERPRET it as well! **[13]**

***Paul affirms that we should sing and pray with the Spirit AND with the mind.**

-This involves spiritual action, emotion, and understanding! **[Vs. 14-15]**

-This allows others to REJOICE with you over the TRUTH. **[Vs. 16]**

-Paul would rather speak 5 words with understanding in church than 10,000 in an unknown tongue!

***Tongues are meant to be a SIGN to the unbelieving world. [Vs. 21-22]**

-This requires that we be MATURE in our understanding of this gift. **[Vs. 20]**

-We must choose to put tongues in its PROPER PLACE in our gatherings.

BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR PROPHECY AND TONGUES:

***Prophecy and tongues can be a powerful witness to both believers and unbelievers within the church.**

1 Corinthians 14:23-25 NASB

23 Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

-We must not bring CONFUSION into church with tongues. **[Vs. 23]**

-Instead, as we exercise the gift of prophecy, people will be brought to God!

*Conviction of sin

- *Secrets of the heart will be revealed
- *God's presence will be clearly seen and felt

***Prophecy and tongues must be exercised with ORDER and SELF-CONTROL.**

1 Corinthians 14:26-33 NASB

26 **What is the outcome then**, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification.** 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; 28 but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. 30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; 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.

*The "Word Gifts" can be a REGULAR PART of church gatherings. **[Vs. 26]**

- They are all aspects of TEACHING God's Word
- They must be exercised with SELF-CONTROL
- They are unique forms of Spirit-given wisdom and revelation

*At CHC, tongues spoken in public must adhere to certain guidelines:

- Unbelievers who do not speak our native language must be present.
- There must be an interpreter present who can help all to understand.
- This will be CALLED "OUT OF ORDER" if it violates these rules.

1 Corinthians 14:39-40 NASB

39 **Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.** 40 **But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.**

*Many of the GREATEST EXPERIENCES of God that I have ever had came as a result of God working in and speaking through other believers in church gatherings.

- *1994 Super bowl Sunday
- *Many small group meetings

My desire for CHC is that we honor Christ by how we ALL GROW in our faith and in our understanding of God, and by how we ALL express the gifts and abilities that he has so graciously given to us as a church family. I pray that when people come in our midst, they CLEARLY SEE and FEEL the presence of God on us in this place!

Let's pray.