

What Are You Building?

1 Corinthians 14:1-40

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Introduction: Words are cheap today. With one depressed button on a computer we can eliminate words forever, without even a trace remaining in memory. However, the Bible says words have great power. God's Word, especially, always accomplishes His purposes, because it is spoken with His personal power.

In this chapter Paul focuses on the exciting potential of God-inspired speech in the Christian community. Having established in 1 Corinthians 13 that love should motivate all the gifts, Paul now turns to a concrete example of love-ministry through inspired speech. But like every exciting gift, there are abuses to be understood and regulated.

Recall a time when something that was shared from the congregation during a worship service (or in a small group) truly encouraged you. What characterized this word ministry?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-19. Underline or circle things repeated or emphasized.

What did God want the Corinthians to follow and to desire? (v. 1)

Evidently, the Corinthians placed great value on the gift of tongues. Why does Paul prefer prophecy to (uninterpreted) tongues (vv. 1-5)?

What illustrations does Paul use to show why (uninterpreted) tongues do not build up the church (vv. 6-12)?

What remedy does Paul suggest (vv. 13-19)?

In what ways might we be guilty of meaningless or mindless worship today?

How can Paul's counsel improve the quality of our worship?

Read verses 20-25. Underline or circle things that are repeated or emphasized. What does Paul say about the *purpose* of tongues and of prophecy?

Why would prophetic speech rather than tongues cause visitors to sense God in our midst (vv. 23-25)?

Read verses 26-40. Underline or circle things that are repeated or emphasized. Under what circumstances should prophets speak or remain silent, and why (vv. 29-33)?

How can Paul's statements here be harmonized with his teaching about women praying and prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:5)?

Some worship services are so "orderly" that they put us to sleep. Others are so "free" that they seem out of control. How does this chapter promote both freedom and order in our worship?