



Speak Clearly

RECAP

This week's focus: "Spiritual gifts are for service, not for show."

In 1 Corinthians 12-14 Paul is giving the church in Corinth guidance on how to use their God-given supernatural gifts with a particular focus on corporate worship. In Chapter 12 he talks about how the various gifts in the Body of Christ mimic the different parts of the human body. Like human body parts, there are many diverse gifts, but they all work together as one.

In Chapter 13 he stresses that love is more important than exercising any one gift. Our motive behind using our gifts to build up the church should always be love. Without the love of Christ as our motivation, we are as meaningless as a random clanging cymbal struck in the middle of a beautiful ballad. A spiritual gift used out of order is noisy, obnoxious, and distracting.

Continuing his instruction regarding "spiritual stuff", Paul begins to focus on the gifts of prophecy and tongues in chapter 14. This chapter is often referred to as "The Rowdy Chapter". Paul tells the Corinthians, the use of spiritual gifts in the congregation needs structure and order — especially with the gifts of tongues and prophecy. These were dynamic gifts that were being misused in the congregation and causing confusion and division. The Corinthian church turned into a free-for-all with people speaking in tongues, asking questions, and prophesying without any regard to order or structure. They were left with a pretty chaotic event, with very little edification.

Paul steps in to give guidance and instruction around the use of prophecy and tongues. To us these passages can seem controversial and even unsettling. As we seek to understand them, we are to remember the goal of his letter is to bring clarity out of chaos. Much like the church in Corinth, we need clarity around the use of these supernatural gifts. It's clear that any use of a gift that causes confusion or division in the church is a misuse of the gift. Tongues and prophecy are no different.

Most of us live our lives with some level of predictability and order. In many ways, order leads to greater freedom. If you've ever driven in a major urban area of a developing country, you know the feeling of how a lack of order can lead to chaos. Imagine driving on streets where everyone is pursuing their individual paths and plans. This often leads to a lack of freedom. The same is true in a worship gathering. We're meant to come ready to contribute and participate but not at the expense of one another or the planned structure for worship. Some of us think that the Holy Spirit's job is to inspire spontaneity. However, when we dig into the Holy Spirit's ministry, we see that one of His major works is to bring order out of chaos. This is not a prohibition from showing emotion in worship, being exuberant or responding in praise. Rather this passage teaches us that the public gathering should be a place where God is exalted. We gather not to worship any gift but to worship the Giver of the gifts. We come together as a group of diverse people with diverse gifts to build up one another in faith and do so in a way that is respectful and ordered. We are called to be led by the Spirit and fed by God's Word.

We're wired by our culture to come to church ready to receive. Paul however would have us come to church ready to contribute to the worship gathering. Each person has something to give to build up the Body of Christ in an orderly way. So as you come to worship, come ready to give, not just receive.



Speak Clearly

SHARE (5-10 min)

1. Icebreaker Question: Share one of your most embarrassing moments from your childhood. What did you learn about life from that incident?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read 1 Corinthians 14

2. How did God speak to you through the scripture and the sermon this week? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
3. What has been your personal experience with the gift of prophecy or tongues? What was the result of your experience?
4. Read Chapter 14, describe what a Corinthian worship service may have looked like.
5. What instructions does Paul give for speaking in tongues and prophecy? What is our church's stance on speaking in tongues and prophecy?
6. Do you think the Holy Spirit's work is naturally more spontaneous or orderly? What are some reasons Paul desires for the worship service to be orderly?
7. What are some specific ways you can contribute to the church in the spirit of verse 26? How does order and structure allow for everyone in the room to learn and be encouraged?
8. What questions does 1 Corinthians 14 leave you with? How can you go about finding answers to them? What are some ways you can use your gifts to build up your Life Group this week?

SUPPORT (15 min)

PRAY: Let's give God a chance to speak through his body! Start your prayer time by asking, "Has the Spirit of God put anything on anybody's heart to share?"