

1 Corinthians When Faith & Life Collide

Study 18

Spiritual Gifts in Corporate Worship

1 Corinthians 14:1-39

A. Tongues vs Prophecy

1 Corinthians 14:1-5 (NIV)

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

1. **Fill in the Blanks. According to the video lecture slide and apostle Paul, fill in the blanks on the differences between the spiritual gift of tongues and prophecy.**

Types of Gift	Tongues	Prophecy
Intelligibility	Unintelligible	Intelligible
Build who?	Build up self	Build up church

B. Tongues Not Helpful to Others Without Interpretation

1 Corinthians 14:6-13 (NIV)

Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air.

Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church. 13 For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say.

2. a) **Fill in the Blanks. According to the video lecture slide, write down Paul's point for each illustration.**

Paul's Illustration	Verse	Paul's point
Illustration 1	1 Cor 14:6	It will not benefit the church if the content is not communicated or understood by the church.
Illustration 2	1 Cor 14:7-8	Even instruments used for battle communicate an instruction, an inarticulate expression does not constitute a communicative act.
Illustration 3	1 Cor 14:11	Makes others feel alien in their own church

b) **Comprehension Question. According to the video lecture and verse 13, what is one condition for speaking in tongues in First Baptist Church?**

The person speaking in tongues (or someone else) will need to be able to interpret what is said.

C. Tongues Not Helpful to Others Without Interpretation

1 Corinthians 14:14-16 (NIV)

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. 16 Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying?

3. a) **Comprehension Question.** According to the video lecture, what does “unfruitful” in verse 14 mean?

“When your mind is unfruitful” means:

NOT that when you're speaking in tongues, your mind isn't thinking about anything;

BUT it means: your mind doesn't produce that kind of fruit that will bless the rest of the church.

Supplementary Reading

Commentary from DA Carson:

“Unfruitful”

When believers address God in an unlearned language, their human spirit is involved but not their mind, because they do not understand what they say. When the mind is involved, the believer speaks with understanding, and then the people who hear benefit from what is being said.

b) **Discussion Question.** Verse 16 says “Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying?”
If someone prays silently in public or in a group, can we say “Amen” to their prayer?

No, for corporate prayers, the prayers need to be intelligible for the others to understand, and participate together by saying Amen.

Speaking in tongues: Can hear Cannot Understand Cannot say Amen

Praying silently for corporate prayer in public: Cannot hear Cannot Understand Cannot say Amen

Praying silently in private should not be an issue since you know what you are saying to God. Praying privately in public space also is not as issue (eg. if you are eating alone in public and want to say grace silently), the issue is when you want an "Amen" from others

D. Paul's Personal Practice

1 Corinthians 14:17-19 (NIV)

You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

4. Discussion Question. According to the video lecture and verses 17-19, what's Paul's personal practice in regard to speaking in tongues?

Apostle Paul can himself speak in tongues, but he seems to do it privately. He chooses to speak intelligible words in his public ministry in church.

E. Speaking in Tongues in Public Worship to Show off is a Sign of Immaturity

1 Corinthians 14:20 (NIV)

Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

5. Discussion Question. According to the video lecture, why was it "like children" or "evil" to speak in tongues?

Because the people in Corinth were using the gift of speaking in tongues to show off that they had a more "spiritual" status. This is a very immature way of thinking and is evil to elevate ourselves and to put others down.

F. Tongues as Sign of Judgement

1 Corinthians 14:21-25 (NIV)

In the Law it is written:

"With other tongues
and through the lips of foreigners
I will speak to this people,
but even then they will not listen to me,
says the Lord."

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"

6. a) Discussion Question. According to the video lecture, why is speaking in tongues a judgment?

It is a reference to Isaiah 28:11, when the Jews were disobedient to God and were captured by the Assyrians as a judgment. If a non-believer hears foreign tongues that they can't understand, they will be hardened in their unbelief, a sign of judgment. But instead, if they hear a prophecy that they can understand, they have an opportunity to repent.

Supplementary Reading

Commentary from DA Carson:

14:22-23 The gift of unlearned languages is indeed a "sign" (v. 22)-not for Christians, who know that believers are praising God with this gift, but for non-Christians, who think the Christians are out of their minds, which may harden non-Christians in their unbelief.

14:24-25 Prophecy is superior to an untranslated language because non-Christians who attend the meetings of the church will be convicted of sin when they hear words of prophecy and are driven to acknowledge God's presence in the congregation.

b) Fill in the Blanks. According to the video lecture slide, write down the 7 reasons why Paul does not advocate using the gift of tongues in corporate worship.

No.	Reasons
1	It does not build up other worshippers because they will not be able to understand

2	It is essentially non-communicative babbling
3	It will make others feel that they are alien in their own church
4	It will not foster corporate participation
5	Their insistence on using tongues was a sign of their immaturity
6	It is a sign of judgment not edification for the church
7	It has adverse effects on unbelievers who visit the church during worship

G. SOP of Speaking in Tongues and Prophecy in a Corporate Setting

1 Corinthians 14:26-33 (NIV)

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.

7. a) Discussion Question. Did Paul ban speaking in tongues in corporate worship?

No, but it’s conditional on whether there is an interpreter and if not the person should keep quiet and do it privately. If there are interpreters then there is an SOP and order of one at a time, a maximum of 2-3. Verse 39 says “do not forbid speaking in tongues.”

b) Discussion Question. Are prophecies accepted without question?

Verse 29 says it should be weighed carefully by believers.

c) Discussion Question. Fill in the Blanks. According to the video lecture slide, write down the three types of prophecy found in the New Testament.

	Prophetic Preaching	Infallible Prophecy	Prophecy of less authority
Details	Gospel preaching	Ceased today	Authority of general content Upbuilding Church Spontaneous
Examples	Eph 2:19-20	Scripture writing like Revelations	Acts 21:8-21, Acts 21: 30

d) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture slide, what is prophecy?

Prophecy is a Gift of the Holy Spirit, it combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations with the ability to address challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation for Upbuilding of the church, and can be in the form of Spontaneous revelation or Sermon: the result of sustained prayer and sustained prayerful contemplation, meditation, and rational reflection.

H. Women Silent Issue?

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (NIV)

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

8. Discussion Question. What's happening in Verses 34-35? Is Apostle Paul contradicting himself since 1 Corinthians 11:5 allows women to prophesy?

It seems that there was an issue in Corinth where the women or wives may be speaking in a way that did not bring unity to the church.

Supplementary Reading

Commentary from DA Carson:

“remain silent”: Evidently when others examine a spoken prophecy. Paul is not issuing a general command for women to be silent: they pray and prophesy in the assemblies of the church (11:5). Paul is addressing married women (v. 35) who might want to be involved in the evaluation of their husband’s prophecy or who disrupt the service by speaking with their husbands.

“in submission”: Married women are to honor their husbands and avoid any contribution in the worship service that brings disgrace upon their husbands, e.g., evaluating their husband’s prophecy (which is the context of vv. 34-35) as false-a verdict that should be left to others to pronounce.

“as the law says”: Paul seems to appeal in general terms to woman’s creation from man in Gen 2.

“inquire about something”: Ask questions about the prophecy that (presumably) the husband proclaimed and that other members in the church evaluated.

I. Paul’s Final Words on the Topic

1 Corinthians 14:36-39 (NIV)

Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

9. Discussion Question. What is Paul’s summary on the topic?

From DA Carson's commentary: Paul’s apostolic authority confirms that what he writes is the Lord’s command and that the church in Corinth must obey it. Paul summarises and concludes his discussion about how to use spiritual gifts. **be eager to prophesy**. This gift edifies the church (see vv. 1,4). **do not forbid speaking in tongues**. Paul is not abolishing the gift of speaking in an unlearned language; he is correcting its improper use.

Takeaway

- 1) The gifts exercised in corporate worship should build the church, tongues are counter-productive in corporate worship especially when no one can interpret.
- 2) Prophecy is preferred but also must be regulated.
- 3) Worship is participative for upbuilding.
- 4) Worship is orderly, not chaotic.
- 5) Worship is understanding, not like other religions where things are chanted without any understanding.

Case Study

Case 1 – Prophecy Today

Donald Tak comes from a church that often has people speaking in prophecy. From prophesying God's plans in specific people's lives such as work, future, and marriage partner. He met Mickey Mao who attends a different church through Bible Study Fellowship (BSF). Mickey is sceptical of prophecies and warns that the punishment specified for false prophets in the Old Testament is severe:

"If any prophet dares to speak a message in My name that I have not commanded him to speak, or to speak in the name of other gods, that prophet must be put to death" (Deuteronomy 18:20).

The Bible describes false prophets as adulterous (Jeremiah 23:14), treacherous (Zephaniah 3:4), drunkards (Isaiah 28:7), wicked (Jeremiah 23:11), liars (Jeremiah 14:14; 23:14), and associated with divination and witchcraft (Jeremiah 14:14; Ezekiel 22:28; Acts 13:6).

Seeing that a lot of prophecies especially of end times have come about to be false, he disregards all people who claim to have prophecies today.

1. a) Discussion question. How should we think about the gift of prophecy?

We should not despise them but test them:

1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 (ESV) Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast to what is good.

b) Discussion question. How do we test them?

Thankfully, the Bible outlines foolproof tests for recognizing a false prophet. The key is to know what a true prophet is like:

- A true prophet's words will be fulfilled (Deuteronomy 18:21–22; Jeremiah 28:8–9).
- A true prophet's teachings are consistent with Scripture (2 Peter 1:20–21; Revelation 22:18–19).
- A true prophet's teachings will encourage righteous behaviour and provide spiritual benefit (Deuteronomy 13:1–4; Jeremiah 23:13–14, 32; Ezekiel 13:17–23; 14:4–8; Lamentations 2:14).
- A true prophet's life will reflect a divine call (Isaiah 28:7; Jeremiah 23:10–11, 14; 29:9; Zephaniah 3:4; Matthew 7:15–20).
- A true prophet will acknowledge Jesus Christ as divine (1 John 4:1–6).

Supplementary Reading

<https://www.gotquestions.org/false-prophets.html>