

Take-Aways for Small Group Leaders to Consider

Paul recognizes and celebrates spiritual gifts in the church, but something is clearly out of balance with how the Corinthian church uses these gifts. Recall how Paul addresses spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 13 and the importance of the heart behind the gift.

Richard Hays writes,

Having laid the groundwork in chapters 12 and 13, Paul now addresses the problem of the Corinthians' worship in more specific terms. Some of the Corinthians – presumably those who consider themselves gifted with wisdom and knowledge – are placing inordinate emphasis on the gift of tongues. They believe that their ability to speak in a heavenly language that surpasses human understanding is the ultimate sign of their power and maturity. The community's worship assembly; however, has fallen into disorderly confusion, as various members speak simultaneously and unintelligibly under the inspiration of the Spirit, perhaps even competitively seeking to outdo one another. (Hays: 233).

Chapter 14, in its entirety, has some challenging passages far beyond the scope of the message or the time you'll have to discuss in your small group. In particular, verse 22 seems to contradict what immediately follows and could divert the conversation. Hays' commentary explains that this verse is a partial quote of Isaiah 28, which is a judgement against the rulers of Jerusalem:

The point of Isaiah 28:11-13 is that because the scoffing rulers have refused to listen to the prophetic promise of the rest, but have instead tried to create security for themselves by making an alliance with Egypt, the word of God will henceforth be to them gibberish spoken in an alien tongue. (Hays: 240)

Consider the passages leading up to these verses:

- Chapter 11: 17-34: Eating the Lord's supper *together* versus in private/separately as a sign of status
- Chapter 12: Different spiritual gifts *come together to form one body* versus seeing particular gifts superior
- Chapter 13: *Love* at the center of spiritual gifts versus elevated status
- Chapter 14: Using gifts to *build up the church* versus using the gift of tongues to claim a greater holiness

Review Paul's views on the gift of tongues

- He uses them and sees the gift of tongues as a gift
- Someone using tongues in a worship service should have an interpreter or remain quiet
- Everything in the church, including speaking in tongues, must build up the church

Analyze the Text Helps

1. Given the response is one of worship, it can only be that they are made free by knowing salvation from sin is freely given to those who believe in Jesus

SUMMARY AND REVIEW

Take 5 minutes to discuss this week's sermon.

INTRO TO THE TEXT:

This chapter relates closely to the prior chapters where Paul rebukes the dysfunction of the Corinthian church for wasting God's gifts and seeking glory for themselves. In this passage, Paul specifically seeks to address speaking in tongues, which he clearly affirms as a spiritual gift, but points out that it only serves as a gift *when* it builds up the church.

READ 1 Corinthians 14:23-26**ANALYZE THE TEXT**

1. What do you think Paul means when he says *brought under judgment by all* for an inquirer or non-believer? (See take-aways for help)
2. What do verses 25-26 tell you about the context and power of prophesy?
3. In 14:26, Paul summarizes the purpose of any gift is to build up the church. How does it relate to previous messages/sermons? Is it different in any way?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER:

The church in Corinth is under the influence of its position as a geographical cultural center with significant status in the Roman Empire. Travelers passing through would likely walk into a church full of people speaking in tongues and find it comparable to any number of pluralistic temples in the city.

The Corinthians' affinity for the gift of tongues may be related to a belief that angels had a different language or simply a supernatural means to speak with God. Throughout chapter 14, Paul characterizes the gift of tongues, describing both limitations and benefits. When it comes to common worship, he points out that it is of no benefit to the church if no one can interpret what is being said – and ultimately serves as a disruption to everyone else. (vv 39-40)

There is a lot of discussion about the use of tongues today, either in prayer language or in worship. Paul acknowledges the gift of tongues as useful and states that he uses them even more than the Corinthians in verse 18, but immediately follows by saying *but in the*

church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue in verse 19.

Prophesy doesn't necessarily mean predicting the future – it also can mean declaring a convicting truth. Consider the comparative example Paul provides in verses 23-25, where God's truth is so powerful that it speaks to someone's heart in such a way they fall down and worship.

In verse 26, note that Paul says *each of you has a hymn, word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation*. Consider the meaning of this: these things are expected of someone attending worship gathering. *As the Holy Spirit equips us, we are called to bring our gifts into worship*. Yet, the Corinthians sought to take over a worship service with disruptive demonstrations of apparent spirituality. Paul corrects them in their intent and delivery, but also presents them with expectations to participate in worship with far more than just their presence.

APPLY

1. Do you see spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, when expressed today, in line with Paul's teaching?
2. There are always temptations to appear more spiritual or "put-together" through actions or displays that aren't inherently wrong - but can be with the wrong motive. Can you think of any examples in the church today?
3. What do you think a prophetic church community looks like? Do you feel equipped to participate in worship with a contribution Paul describes in verse 26? How can we encourage each other to live into our gifting?

MEMORIZE

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.
1 Corinthians 14:26

Suggestions for further reading: Richard Hays, *Interpretation: First Corinthians*