

How much of what we do in public worship is really biblically based? Two weeks ago we began to study a section that stretches us. The Corinthian church needed some help in this area.

God has given His people spiritual gifts (ch 12). These are to be exercised in love (ch 13). They are to be used in the church for the good of the church.

But gifts can be misunderstood and misused. When this happens in the corporate worship services of a church, that's a real problem. And that's what was happening in Corinth. The controversy had to do with the gift of tongues.

Remember two questions we posed...

1. What counsel did Paul give the Corinthians for what *they* should do?
2. How does this counsel apply to us (esp. in the area of tongues and prophecy)?

Review: Last time we investigated the first section of 1 Corinthians 14...

I. Here are the church's responsibilities (1).

- A. We should pursue the way of love.**
- B. We should desire spiritual gifts.**
- C. We should give priority attention to the gift of prophecy.**

II. Here are the reasons (2-5).

In this section Paul contrasts two particular spiritual gifts, tongues (or "other languages") and prophecy.

Tongues	Prophecy
Speaks to God (2)	Speaks to men (3)
No one understands (2)	Strengthens, encourages, and comforts people (3)
Edifies self (4)	Edifies the church (4)
Has some value (5)	Has greater value (5)

III. Here are some illustrations of the deficiencies of tongues (6-11).

- A. Listening to tongues without interpretation is like musical notes without a melody (6-7).**
- B. Listening to tongues without interpretation is like a trumpet that doesn't give a clear sound (8).**
- C. Listening to tongues without interpretation is like hearing noise without meaning (9).**
- D. Listening to tongues without interpretation is like listening to a language you don't understand (10-11).**

IV. Here are some implications for church worship services (12-25).

- A. Excel in spiritual gifts that build up the church (12).**
- B. If tongues are used, follow these guidelines (13-19).**
 1. *Pray for interpretation (13).*

2. *Engage your mind, not just your spirit (14-15).*
 3. *Think about how it will affect the rest of the church (16-17).*
 4. *Realize the limited usefulness of tongues (18-19).*
- C. Don't be childish (20-21).**

New Material...

There's where we left off last time. Let's go a step further. Why did God give these gifts?

D. Remember the God-given intent of the gifts (22-25).

Q: What was the intent?

1. *Tongues are a sign for unbelievers (22a).*

Q: In what way were tongues a "sign" for unbelievers? Trace through Acts and you'll see tongues in Acts 2 (when the gospel reached the Jews). Then you'll see evidences of the Spirit with the Samaritans who believed in Jesus (8:17ff., though no mention of tongues per se). Finally, the Gentiles spoke in tongues (10:46; again in 19:6). The gift appears when the gospel broke ground in going to the next phase of fulfilling Acts 1:8 to show the continuity of the church.

Q: Does this need for a sign continue to today? Not in my estimation. It was a sign to the unbelievers to show that what the Gentiles received by believing in Jesus was the same as what the Samaritans received which was the same as what the Jews received. There is one church, one Holy Spirit, one gospel, one Savior.

2. *Prophecy is for believers (22b).*

Q: What does prophecy do for believers? The gift helps people grow.

3. *What we do in worship services affects those watching us (23-25).*

Q: How so? Paul gives a scenario.

Key: It's not just "me and God" in worship. I'm a part of a bigger picture.

In the last section of this chapter, Paul gives specific guidelines for what should happen in church worship services.

V. Here are some guidelines for church worship services (26-40).

A. Whatever we do in a worship service, the goal is edification (26).

The end of verse 26 says, "for the strengthening of the church." The focus of the gathering of the local church is edification (not evangelism; and not even "worship" as we often hear it defined these days??).

What should happen in church services? Paul says...

1. *There should be participation.*

Q: By whom? Not just a few performers. Granted the Corinthians were overdoing it ("*Everyone* has a hymn, etc"). But participation is vital. That's why the Spirit has gifted His people, so they'll use their gifts.

2. *There should be a variety of ministries.*

Q: What are some of the ministries Paul mentions here?

B. Follow these stipulations for tongues (27-28).

Tongues was the biggest source of controversy in the Corinthian church (and it continues today). Paul didn't forbid tongues. He did give careful parameters...

1. *Only two or three should speak in a service.*
2. *Only one should speak at a time.*
3. *If there is no interpreter, no one should speak.*

Q: What's the point of these stipulations? In part, they would keep the "bizarre" from being the focal point of the worship service. The focus would be on *learning*, not *wondering*.

C. Follow these stipulations for prophecy (29-33).

1. *Two or three should speak in a service (29).*

Q: Why a plurality of speakers?

Q: Why only two or three?

Note: Our focus today isn't on getting new revelation from God. God has already given to His church the necessary revelation for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3-4).

2. *Others should evaluate what they hear.*

The KJV says "judge." What does this mean?

e.g. the Bereans in Acts 17...

3. *If someone receives a revelation, he should speak (30).*

This stipulation makes sure that *God* is in control of the service, not man. How so? A man could drone on and on. But God could break in by sending a new message (which of course had to be tested to make sure it was from Him).

4. *The purpose is instruction and encouragement (31).*

Notice the emphasis is on the *mind*, not the emotions. The purpose of gathering is to have our thinking stretched, enriched by truth, so that our hearts will be encouraged.

5. *The person speaking should be under control (32).*

Some seem to view it as being really spiritual to be out of control. They say a person is really "in the Spirit" if his mind stops functioning and he moves into a transcendent state. No. Paul says the person speaking should have his spirit under control.

E.g.—Wierbe's illustration of the preacher who kept going overtime and excused it on the Spirit...

6. *Since God is a God of peace, the service should demonstrate order (33).*

Not chaos, not confusion, but dignity and a sense of reverent order. Note that who we are and what we do is determined by who God is and what God is like. People ought to be able to look at us and come away with a clearer understanding of what God is like.

D. Follow these stipulations for women (34-35).

There are various approaches to these verses, ranging from some who say Paul didn't write them, to others who use them to conclude women should never speak in church at all (but in 11:5 Paul already said women will pray in church). Some have relegated these verses to culture, that if you're in a culture where women aren't allowed to speak publicly the church shouldn't allow it either.

But what is the context? Paul has just been talking about people speaking in worship services using the gifts of tongues and prophecy. And what did he say is to

happen when someone gives a message? Verse 29—Others should weigh it carefully. That is, others are to discuss what they have just heard to make sure it is biblical.

But who does the discussing? Who is supposed to guard the doctrinal purity of the church? Who should speak up in church services when it's necessary to debate issues pertaining to biblical truth and how the church is going to function? I believe that's what these verses address.

1. *In evaluating the content of messages, women should remain silent in church (34).*

Q: What if a woman has a question or comment about a matter of evaluation at church?

2. *Women should speak to their husbands at home (35).*

Q: What does that assume about the husbands?

Centuries ago Matthew Henry offered this insight, "As it is the woman's duty to learn in subjection, it is the man's duty to keep up his superiority, by being able to instruct her; if it be her duty to ask her husband at home, it is his concern and duty to endeavour at least to be able to answer her enquiries; if it be a shame for her to speak in the church, where she should be silent, it is a shame for him to be silent when he should speak, and not be able to give an answer, when she asks him at home."¹

E. Here are some summary stipulations (36-40).

Keep something in mind. We are not living in Corinth 25 years after Pentecost and 45 years before the completion of the NT canon. The Corinthians did not have the completed Bible. We do. The Corinthians had some special Spirit-given gifts for this unique transition phase. In my estimation, we don't have those gifts today. They're not needed. In fact, I am concerned about the prevalent search for *something more* in the contemporary church. Instead of appreciating what God has given us in His Word, many are searching for *something more*.

Our focus needs to be to grow in the knowledge of what He has already given us. The focus today is on looking *back* to the revelation already given, not looking *up* for new revelation (even Peter modeled this when he wrote 2 Peter in the late 60's; see 2 Peter 3:1-2).

Here is Paul's summary to address the Corinthian confusion...

1. *Remember that these guidelines come from the Lord (36-38).*
2. *Be eager to prophesy.*
3. *Don't forbid tongues.*
4. *Do everything in an orderly manner.*

¹Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.