**1] Power for a Purpose**

Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 12-14 are addressing an issue. He is providing clarity and purpose.

* **2]** We gain clarity and purpose in our lives when we are confronted with our need to grow.
* Some always lack clarity and purpose in their life, because anytime a need to grow is addressed, their defense is raised.

Why does it matter that we address the issue of Speaking in Tongues?

* *Just give me something that applies to me…I don’t care about this. It’s not going to affect my everyday life.*
  + Tell me how to be a better person, parent, student, employee, friend, citizen.
  + We can get selective and consumeristic in our view of church, and it will bleed over into how we consume God’s Word, and how we relate to God.
* **3]** A consumer mindset can raise a lot of barriers between us and God, and between us and the church, which He wants all of us to be a part of.
  + When there is an issue, God wants to address it. But it can be *so* easy to just walk away.
  + God confronts issues so that we will grow.

This is what is going on. The Corinthians are *excited* about Spiritual Gifts. They are excited about feeling spiritually important and special, but they have gotten out of balance.

* God’s purpose for these letters isn’t to minimize, diminish, or prohibit Spiritual Gifts.
* Why would He give gifts, and then say, “on second thought, you guys kind of messed this up, so I’m going to take it back.”

No, He confronts them with hard truth, not so that they will stop, but that they will move forward with wisdom, clarity, purpose, and power. These gifts are not meant to glorify people, but to glorify God.

* **4]** DON’T IGNORE God’s teaching for your life. Don’t seek comfort or convenience. Seek to be a contagious, “fire” starter. He is a bringer of life…Let Him birth something in YOU.
  + If you don’t…*you will get bored with Church. You will get complacent. You will get intrigued by other pursuits in your life. You will find community through other institutions in your life, and you will grow cold and distant from the church and God.*
    - God has called us to bear fruit, but the process of pruning and growth, the process of planting and harvest takes faith in God, that He will complete the work He has started.

Through this teaching, God wants to open us up to the possibility of what He can do when we are empowered by His Spirit…worshiping in SPIRIT and in TRUTH.

* There is SO MUCH untapped potential in this Church!

He wants to see this place teeming with life, spiritual growth, new salvations…but it will never happen if we aren’t willing to be a birthing place for ministry and new life, and receive the fulness of power.

**5] Purpose of Speaking in Tongues**

Personal

This was definitely church-wide teaching. But there are some very personal things to learn.

Paul makes it clear that when we meet together, our primary form of communication, teaching, and preaching should be in a known tongue. BUT he is NOT prohibiting tongues.

When you read chapter 14, it must be remembered that God is bringing clarity to a church, and how the church is operating when they get together. He is laying out clarity on both a personal, and a community-wide level.

**6]** There are two main purposes for tongues, in a person’s personal walk with the Lord:

1. Praise

Tongues on the day of Pentecost were a declaration of the wonders of God.

**7] *Acts 10:46: “Speaking in tongues and extolling God.”***

* It builds up the one who is speaking.
* Speaking not to men, but to God.
* Utters mysteries by the Spirit.

When God is praised who is it for? For the speaker to express their devotion, their love to God.

* It builds connection…Closeness…Trust…Dependence.

There should be a freedom to praise the Lord in our lives. There is so much forced praise…so much praise for show. But let there be a genuine, unhindered heart of praise and worship.

We’re not driving a U-haul…we don’t need an artificial “governor”.

* The Word is the governor. The Holy Spirit is the governor.

Many fear of being “out of control” in their worship…Self-control is a Fruit of the Spirit. That means He will provide the control, if I am in submission to Him.

* If I’m not in full submission, then I will be the source of control, and that doesn’t work.
* Some might say: “I don’t need to do that to worship God.” It’s not “do you need to” but “are you willing”?

When I begin to praise the Lord “in my Spirit”, there is a freedom, there is an intimacy with the Lord that I cannot replicate in my own words. An expression of the greatness of God, His mercy and grace towards me, of which there are no words that adequately express it.

***8] 1 Corinthians 14:14-15: For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.***

My mind does not comprehend what is being said, but *only* God understands. I pray, I sing with my spirit. In these times of personal prayer, it is an expression of worship that cannot be replicated, except by the moving of the Spirit of God. Paul is not trying to say, “don’t do this at all”, but is providing wisdom: “be mindful of the purpose of your meeting together”.

Church as usual is boring. Part of why church attendance has grown more inconsistent…if God is not allowed to intervene, and be in control…it’s the same thing over and over. Even if it’s a great production, if it’s the same production, what is the point?

* **9]** We don’t need production…WE NEED POWER. We don’t need schedule…WE NEED SURRENDER. We don’t need a program…WE NEED PURPOSE.

In light of Paul’s teaching on tongues as praise to the Lord, what should we do? We should praise the Lord! People are curious…how do I speak in tongues? Don’t worry about how…just PRAISE THE LORD! Glorify God, and He will give the utterance. Be done with the formula, the ritual, the tradition…just praise the Lord!

* Let us be a Praising church. “That’s not my personality”.
  + Since when is God limited by our personality?
* Let us be a worshiping church. “I don’t understand it.”
  + What I don’t understand, is how God can be so good, and we can be so quiet with our worship. People fall over each other to honor and thank people *in public* in the world, but as Christians we suddenly think that our honor and thanks to God should *only* be in private.

The Gift of Tongues is meant to glorify God in praise, with passion and surrender, drawing us closer to Him.

It works in tandem with prayer and devotion to His Word, leading to a second purpose of Speaking in tongues: to bring an intimacy in prayer, that cannot be duplicated, apart from the Holy Spirit.

1. **10]** Intercessory Prayer

Have you ever not had the words to pray, to know what to say? There have been times when I don’t know what I need…BUT THERE IS SOMEONE WHO DOES.

***11] Romans 8:26-27: Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.***

*“I wish I knew what to pray.”* NEWS FLASH: You don’t, and you’re not going to figure it out.

* Surrender to the Holy Spirit, who wants to intercede.
* Countless times in prayer, when I’ve come to the end of my words, and began to pray in tongues as the Spirit…You know what happens?
  + A peace, a clarity, a comfort, an assurance…I can’t quite explain, because it is deep in my spirit. I know it must be the Holy Spirit interceding through my very imperfect self.
  + When you don’t know what God’s will is…HE DOES…and can pray through you.

***12] Ephesians 6:18: praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,***

* Not sparingly, just when I feel like it, but often. In times of intercession and surrender.
* This comes out of the discussion on the Armor of God.
  + This is a powerful weapon, available to the believer.

***13] Jude 20: But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit,***

* We are “built up” in our faith, *for the glory of God,* when we are in constant prayer.

Speaking in tongues is not meant to be divisive. It’s not meant to be a man-made barometer of how close we are to God. It is meant for communion, praise, prayer, and intimacy with God that edifies the believer, and edifies the people of God, that we might be filled with His power and boldness, to do the will of God.

**14]** Finally…Tongues and Interpretation:

What is it? A message in tongues, spoken by a person in the congregation, that is then followed by words spoken to the church in a known language, as a message of praise and devotion to God.

* Tongues are meant primarily for personal prayer and worship. The frequency with which tongues occur in personal communion with God, in Paul’s experience, far exceed that of tongues occurring in a corporate setting:

***15] 1 Corinthians 14:18-19: I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.***

BUT AGAIN…Paul does not prohibit it. In both Ephesians and Colossians, “singing in the spirit”. In accounts of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts…there was a very real sense of corporate Speaking in Tongues, as the Spirit of God fell upon them.

However…IF speaking in tongues occurs “as the Spirit gives the utterance”…a message in tongues (not just personal prayer, but a singular speaker praying for all to hear) will be in submission to the move of God that is occurring.

**16]** Just as the Corinthians probably bristled at this teaching, if we’re not careful, we can put tradition over the instruction of God’s Word. Is there personal prayer in tongues that occurs in the course of a service? Absolutely. Should it be a free-for-all of person after person consuming the meeting with their “message” in tongues, leaving no room for the spoken word of God? Paul would disagree.

***17] 1 Cor. 14:27-28: If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God.***

Even more important than the number, here is the crux of the matter:

***18] 1 Cor. 14:33: For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.***

We should not be in rejection of this gift…but we should be in submission to the Holy Spirit, and his operation of it. It should build up the body of Christ. It is not a means of elevating people, and their spirituality, but elevating God, and His desire to work among and through the church.

Examples:

Tongues and Interpretation that was completely off-base, “I am going to lob off the heads of leaders”.

* Destructive…Confusing…Not from God…not Biblical

Tongues and Interpretation that is a sign to a bystander

* Tongues and Interpretation at a Billy Graham Crusade
  + He preached 3 points of 5. The 4th point was the interpretation of tongues *verbatim.* The final point was prayed in the benediction.

**19]** When we are in submission to the Holy Spirit…He orchestrates and oversees and governs…and He receives all the glory.

There is so much debate about how and what…but leave today knowing the why: So that God is glorified through your life, and through the Church.

* Praise and Pray in freedom, and expect God to move
* I believe there will be testimonies of people, maybe some who are skeptical, who in prayer and praise, begin to speak in tongues *as the Spirit gives the utterance.*

The call today:

Be empowered for a purpose. Speaking in Tongues is not the end, but a gift that God uses to edify.

Be a vessel that He can work through. Surrender to Him. Praise Him. Cry out to Him.