

“The Rowdy Chapter” // 1 Corinthians 14:1–40 // *Cutting Through the Noise* # 15

(Announcement)

This is WHM, and that provides us a moment to thank God for the many women who have shaped our ministry here and continue to lead. Women like Bonnie Shrum, Dana Leach and Alex Akinsola and Lori Frances, Cherie Scholes, Amy Whitfield and many others.

We also wanted to look back and acknowledge the women who have shaped the global church, and one is a woman whose name is attached to a huge offering we participate in every Easter: **Annie Armstrong--she lived in the 1800's and used her life to** galvanize support for church planting in the United States, particularly among immigrants, Native Americans and in Cuba. She helped launch out the first black, female missionaries and she advocated for justice for Native Americans.

Over the years, more than \$2B has been given in her name through a special Easter offering that our church participates in that goes entirely toward church planting and evangelism work in the U.S. We don't take up special money here on the weekend for it, but every year we designate a portion of our budget each year to it.

This year, TSC is contributing \$140K. We can do that because of our generosity. Your giving here supports this and so many other mission

efforts. So I want to invite you right now to participate in worship through the giving of our tithes and offerings. **3 ways to give**

(Introduction)

If you have your Bibles, open them to 1 Corinthians 14, and here we go.¹ We're nearly at the end of this great letter, but like every car trip I've taken with my four kids, somehow the last few miles end up being the most adventurous. 1 Cor 14 is, as one of our women's Bible study teachers, Toiya Dunbar, says, "The Rowdy Chapter." It's all about the spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy.

Let me start by giving you a little perspective: there's generally 4 positions when it comes to these more spectacular gifts--(and, let me say before I begin, all of them have valid biblical insights, and there's stuff we can learn from each. And different ones of you come from these traditions:

1. **First, there is the Cessationist position:** This position holds that gifts like prophecy, tongues and healings have ceased. These gifts were special "sign" gifts, relevant only to a particular era of the church which have ceased in our day. Now, full disclosure, I grew up in this one, and I do believe that many of these gifts were more relevant in certain eras of Christian history than others, but I can't find anything in the Bible that justifies the blanket claim that they've ceased. In fact, Paul ends this chapter telling the Corinthians not to forbid the practice of these gifts, and I want to honor that. At the end of 1 Cor 13, Paul told us that these kinds of gifts would continue, at least in part, until we see Jesus face to face, and that hasn't happened yet.

¹ Works Consulted: Andrew Wilson, *1 Corinthians for You* (The Good Book Company); John Mark Comer, "Tongues + Prophecy: Part 1 and Part 2," Preached at Bridgetown Church, July 3 and 10, 2011; Timothy Mackie, "Why We Gather 'As We Gather,'" Posted on YouTube, Aug 30, 2020; David Platt, "Supernatural Church, pt. 4: Refocusing Our Priorities As The Church | 1 Corinthians 14:1–26," Posted on McLean Bible Church Audio Podcast, Jul 25, 2021; Tim Keller, sermon on 1 Corinthians 14; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.

2. On the other end we have **the Pentecostal position**, which believes these gifts are in full operation, and every Christian should experience them, and if you haven't experienced them, you should question to see if there's something wrong with you spiritually.
3. A step back from that is what we call **the charismatic position: which is that** these gifts are in existence, and part of the normal ministry experience of the church, though not every believer experiences all of them.
4. Then there's a 4th position that usually goes under the name "**open but cautious**." This position believes that the gifts have *not* ceased, but that most of the ways the gifts are being used today in so-called Spirit-filled churches is neither biblical nor helpful. That there's a lot of manipulation and psychological tricks involved in some of these places.
 - o I think this position raises a lot of valid concerns, and I used to put myself in this one, but I've grown uncomfortable with simply having an attitude of openness toward these spiritual gifts, since Paul tells in 1 Cor 14 to be hungry from them. Look at how he opens **chapter 14: [1] Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.** Hunger for them; yearn to have these experiences with the Holy Spirit. Three times in these chapters Paul tells us to "desire" these spiritual gifts, especially prophecy.²
 - o I want to be the kind of church where people frequently say, after coming to one of our services or going to a small group: *I didn't just hear a Word today, I experienced the presence of GOD. Isn't that what you want?*
5. So that leads me to a 5th position, the Summit Church position. You won't find this in most theology books, yet, but it goes by: "**charismatics with seatbelt.**" It's basically a combo of positions 3 and 4. It recognizes the validity of spiritual gifts, and even hungers for them, but it has a **seatbelt**: We recognize that a lot of things that go under the name "Spirit" in certain circles aren't necessarily

of the Spirit and God desires us, as Paul tells us in chapter 14, to do all things "decently and in order."

We want to be a Spirit-filled church, but we don't have any vans with flames printed down the side, and I don't typically smack people on the head at the end of church so they fall down... I'm not saying there's no way the Holy Spirit would ever do that in any circumstance, I'm just really sensitive to ever coercing something or manipulating some work of the Spirit. (Some of you have heard me tell the story... (being prayed over by famous charismatic leader--maybe your experience is different))

But SUMMIT: I want us to experience all that the Spirit wants to do in the church; to not merely be open to them, but desirous of and *expectant* of them; at the same time, I want us to avoid fleshly imitation and pursue these things only in the way the Bible instructs us to. **You in for this?**

Out of curiosity: How many of you are from a Pentecostal or charismatic background?

- Put your hand in the air. Go ahead and put both hands, I know you're more comfortable that way. You make our church so much better.
- You know which Summit members have a Pentecostal background because they are the ones in the lobby stretching before the service starts so they don't pull a hammy during worship because they are gonna be doing some running and jumping.

Let's just work our way through this chapter, shall we? Deep breath: **[1] Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. [2] For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit.**

² 12:31, 14:39, and 14:1

Do you see where it says, “**tongues are spoken to God?**” Not to other people, but *to God*. Here’s a working definition of tongues: a “**form of prayer and praise you express to God in a language you do not understand.**” **Wayne Grudem**³

Let me show you 2 examples of this from Acts: Acts 2:1 “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. [2] And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. [3] And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and ***began to speak in other tongues*** as the Spirit gave them utterance. **Now, this had to be an awesome experience.** When it says, “a sound like a rushing wind” this doesn’t mean, “a gentle breeze,” the word in Greek means hurricane force wind. Imagine what that would be like: In this room there was a sound like a tornado, like a freight train coming; and then tongues of fire appeared on the heads of each church member. That was the image of the Spirit coming into the church. That’s the power you and I have inside of you.

[5] Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. [6] And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak ***in his own language***. That’s key: these were other human languages; they may have been unknown to the speaker, but they were known to somebody. Somebody recognized it as praise to God in his native tongue. “Hey, he’s praising God in my native language!”

Let’s jump to **Acts 10:44**, (This time, Peter is preaching to Cornelius and his band of Roman soldiers); this was one of the first times that Gentiles were hearing the gospel preached. “**While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.** [45] And the circumcised believers (i.e., the Jews) who had come with

Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. [46] ***For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.***” What were these Gentiles doing? They were praising and extolling God in a language unknown to them. Now, question: when it says, “THEY were hearing them do this...” Who was THEY? The Jews. How did these Jews know these Gentiles were praising and extolling God? **I think it means these Gentiles were speaking in Hebrew, a language they didn’t know.** These newly converted Romans soldiers didn’t know what they were saying, but the Jews present did. It’s like Acts 2 in reverse.

Even if I’m off on that, and these Roman soldiers weren’t speaking in Hebrews, the point is that tongues in Acts, where someone praises God in a language not their own--is not an ecstatic utterance of nonsensical noises--but praising God in an actual, intelligible language. We’ll see this in a minute, but tongues were a sign that God is bringing other nations into his family. Up until this time, God had only been worshiped in Hebrews. But he had promised Abraham that he would extend his salvation into every tribe and language group on earth, and tongues were a sign that this was happening.

Let’s keep moving through this text: [3] **On the other hand** (in contrast to tongues, which are a mysterious form of praise to God), **the one who prophesies** speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

OK, so let’s talk about prophecy for a minute. As we’ve seen, prophecy is speaking God’s word into situations. **This takes 3 primary forms in the Bible:**

The first is just **preaching**--what I do each week. It’s more than just reading the Word or explaining it to you; God gives me spiritual power as I preach to you, and spiritual insight into how to apply it to you. This book is always God’s word, of course, but in this moment, it

³ Grudem, *Bible Doctrines*, 421.

becomes a dynamic, living Word where God is actively speaking to you. This can include the 2nd and 3rd types of prophecy, which are:

Words of **wisdom**, which are insights into issues and application to your day to day lives. Showing you what these principles mean in our context.

Sometimes it includes **words of Knowledge**, which are when God reveals something to me about your lives that I wouldn't naturally know. (I used John 4 as an example of this--where Jesus revealed to the woman at the well that she had had 5 husbands, and the man she was living with now was not her husband. That can happen while I'm preaching. Sometimes I might know it's happening--though sometimes it can happen without me knowing it. Have you ever had the experience of listening to someone teach the Word and make an application and you feel like, "How did he know this was going on with me? Did he read my journals? Did my wife call him?" That's word of knowledge stuff.)

It's not just me or whoever stands on this stage that is supposed to practice prophecy. Paul envisions a congregation in which this happens in conversations at all levels, in small groups and one-on-one conversations: **14:24 But if all prophecy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters... 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.** Through words of knowledge the secrets of his heart are revealed and he knows "**God is in this place.**" I've had this happen to me--brothers and sisters who spoke God's counsel into secret places in my heart; I have friends who've had it happen to them; it's happened to my wife several times.⁴

⁴ For more on this, see John Piper, "When Will Prophecy Cease?" <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/90/031890.html>

Now, to be clear: anything in this category--whether words of wisdom and words of knowledge or what not--these things never take on the weight of Scripture. They are not **the word of God** the way that THIS book is. This, and this alone, is the permanent word of God and it is infallible. Our perceptions of what the Spirit is saying are tentative and very fallible.

That's why Paul says that some have the gift of discernment or the interpretation of spirits. God gives to some the gift of discerning whether particular pieces of revelation or counsel are really from God. That's not true when it comes to Scripture. Nobody here has the gift to say, "That verse is wrong; that verse is right."

Or consider what Paul says in **1 Thessalonians 5:20–21**, Paul says, "**Do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast to what is good.**" When someone gives a word of prophecy, test it to see if it's really from God and if it is, hold fast to it. This shows you words of prophecy are different from Scripture, because Paul would never say that about his own writings or any other Scriptures.⁵ Our prophecies to each other don't carry the weight of Scripture nor should they ever be thought of as "the Word of God." That designation is reserved for the Scripture alone.

Or one more thing that shows you prophetic words are in a different category than Scripture. Look down in 1 Cor 14:36: Paul says that even with all these words of wisdom and knowledge the Corinthians have experienced, still "**...the word of God did not come from you.**" (1

⁵ Paul, in fact, considers acceptance of his writings a test of whether you have the Spirit at all. 1 Cor 14:37, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord."

Cor 14:36) Even with all this Spirit-prompted speech they experienced, the Word of God, or Scripture, did not come from them.

Prophetic speech we give to each other can sometimes be fallible. Let me give you an example Acts 21:10 tells us of a disciple named Agabus who “...(Agabus) told Paul, through the Spirit, that Jews would deliver him into the hands of the Roman rulers.”⁶ Wayne Grudem points out that Agabus was mostly correct, though not entirely. It was the Romans who bound Paul, not the Jews; and the Jews did not take Paul captive, but tried to kill him. Here’s what Dr. Grudem says: “The prediction was not far off, but it had inaccuracies in detail that would have called into question the validity of any Old Testament prophet (or Scriptural writing)... This is exactly the kind of fallible prophecy that would fit the definition of New Testament congregational prophecy—‘reporting in one’s own words something God has spontaneously brought to mind.’”)

So prophecy is letting the Spirit of God speak through us to one another. Paul wants everyone in the church to operate with this gift, and Summit, we need more of it. The Christian world is sometimes split between those who take the Scriptures seriously and those who listen to the Spirit. Some of us really dig into the Bible to discover what it means and others are always trying to discern what the Spirit says. We need BOTH. Word first, yes, but Spirit too. **We want to be led by the Spirit, taught by the Word.**

So, before we move on to tongues, let’s pause for a minute, and let me give you 3 biblical words that should characterize our use of prophetic words at the TSC. Think of these like a grid that you can use in giving or evaluating words of prophecy:

Humility: Never, ever, ever, ever claim the authority of God when you speak. What you are saying is fallible, and other people need to discern if it is from God. **I never ever say to someone, “This is what God says,” unless I have a chapter and verse to back it up.** Instead, I’ll say something like, “Listen, I think God has put this on my heart, and I think he might be saying... but you gotta weigh this out.” The other problem with putting divine weight behind your words is it puts the other person in a terribly awkward position--if you claim that God has told you something, and you’re sure, the other person has either got to submit to your words or call you a false prophet. I have had people say to me, “Pastor, God said this and this to me about you...” and I know they are wrong because they were operating on faulty information! Oh, I could tell you some stories. Don’t create that awkwardness for someone else. Paul sets up the whole system so that we speak with humility. (I had a young lady, years ago, before I got married tell me that God told her we were supposed to get married. And I had to say, “Look... I’m not trying to quench the Holy Spirit here, but the HS is gonna have to reveal that to me and I don’t see that happening any time soon...”) **So, bottom line: even if you are pretty sure of what you’re saying, speak it with humility and a little uncertainty. You’re not giving the word of God.** The Apostles wrote things down and we study them 2000 years ago. You write down what you think God says in an email and we skim it, delete it, and move on.

Second word, **Expectation:** Let’s expect God to do this. He said he would. He promised that at the coming of the Spirit, “Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.” Paul told us to desire these things. Don’t just be open to it, expect it, look for it. I’m not saying the first thing that pops in your mind whenever you pray for someone is from the HS. But you can start there. You can test and affirm it.

In small groups, when you go into prayer times, why not start by asking, “Hey, has the Spirit of God put anything on anybody’s heart to share?” Paul told us to pursue these things, so let’s start our

⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*, 411.

gatherings by giving him a chance to speak through his sons and daughters like he promised.

Now, you say, “But wait a minute--Doesn’t Paul say that don’t only certain people have the gift of prophecy?” Yes, good question. But it’s probably like the gift of generosity or the gift of the evangelist. Every Christian practices these things--it’s just that some are unusually gifted in them. It’s not only those with the gift of generosity who give or only those with the gift of the evangelist who share Christ. In the same way, some have an unusual bestowal of the gift of prophecy, but we can all experience it.

I love how our friend John Mark Comer talks about this. He says, Everyone needs to have a place in the church where they can share what the Spirit has put on their heart for the benefit of others. (At his church and ours, that place is usually the small group). While only certain people have a uniquely powerful prophetic gift, Paul thinks that every member should speak Word-saturated exhortations to each other by a prompting of the Spirit whether as preachers, counselors, leaders, or merely servants. Obviously, some will be more gifted in this respect, but in Paul’s mind, prophecy is some “Spirit stuff” that every member should practice (like evangelism).

Humility, Expectation, **Affirmation**

Let’s affirm someone when God uses them in our lives. They may not even have known they were speaking that way. Two or three of the times that God has spoken most clearly to me came from someone who, I’m pretty sure, didn’t know they were doing it. They thought they were just giving counsel or encouragement but time showed it was from the Holy Spirit. So, let’s affirm this. Even as we pray we can affirm it. When someone is praying and what they are saying is resonating with you, say things like, “Yes, Lord,” and “I agree,” and “I receive that.” You say, “Well, I feel weird doing that, so I say that in my heart and I know God can hear me.” Yes, God can hear your heart, but

the other person can’t. God doesn’t need any encouragement. It’s the other person who does.⁷

Humility, Expectation, Affirmation. A lot more that could be said on this, of course, **but let’s keep moving:** [5] **Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy.** All Paul is saying here is “I’d love for all of you to experience everything. I’m for more intimacy with and gifting in the Spirit.” Of course, he’s already told us that not everybody has every gift. He’s saying, “I wish each of you had them all, but if you’re going to seek a gift, seek prophecy, because...

The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up. [6] Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?

The sole purpose of the gifts was to build the church up. Does speaking in an unknown tongue do that? It may make you feel warm and fuzzy but it does nothing for anyone else.

Then Paul gives 3 great illustrations of this:

Illustration 1: Music: [7] **If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played?** Random blasts don’t make for good music. I’m not a musician, but I remember my elementary school teacher explaining

⁷ One more word, **Edification.** The purpose of prophecy is for the building up of others in the faith. It’s not for building up the speaker. So, when someone gives you a word, ask yourself, first: **1. Does this contradict what God has said clearly elsewhere?** God will never tell you to do something that contradicts his word. Ask: **2. Does it resonate with what God is doing in my life?** (If someone speaks a word to me, it usually resonates with things God is already doing. It’s like they’re just calling out something that God has been doing that I just haven’t recognized yet. I remember a man I barely knew called out a ministry pattern in my life that I just hadn’t seen yet. When he said it, I said, “You’re absolutely right.” And then he prophesied about where God was going to take me in my future, and it all came true. It’s been a great source of encouragement to me. Finally, Ask: **3. Does it glorify God or the prophet?** From sermon by John Mark Comer on 1 Cor 14.

that sounds need 3 things to be considered “music.” Rhythm; harmony; and melody, only then is it “syncopated.” That’s true whether you are talking R&B, classical or 80’s monster ballads. Otherwise, it is chaos.

Illustration 2: Battle cries: [8] And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? Random noises on the battlefield don’t help the army. You are in battle, and you hear a trumpet, and you don’t know if that means go forward, or pull back. That’s chaos. In the same way, random tongues in the church don’t help the church advance. [9] So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air.

Vs. 10, Analogy 3: Human languages: [10] There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, [11] but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me.

If I stood up here during a sermon and said, “*Tuhan kita luar biasa.*” and “*Saya sekarang sakit gas kuat,*” you don’t know what to say. The first phrase was, in Indonesian, “Our God is awesome.” The second was, “I have really bad gas pain.” One deserves an “Amen,” the other an “oh, my.”

Tongues don’t benefit others if they don’t understand what’s being said.

[12] So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church. Simple: seek gifts that build up the body! That’s what love would do. It seeks gifts for service, not for show; to bless and not to boast.

[13] Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. [14] For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is

unfruitful. Paul is saying, “Even for the one speaking in the tongue, it’s better for them if they know what they’re saying. Otherwise, it’s just giving you a tingly feeling and not edifying your mind.” So, as for me, he says, [15] I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also.” I’m not just gonna pray in tongues, I’m going to pray with my mind. I don’t want to just *feel* close to God; I want to be reminded of the truths that make the close to God.

18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.

Remember, the Corinthians thought they were really spiritual because they’d experienced a few of these miraculous gifts. Paul was like, “Just for the record, I’ve got you all beat. “*When I’m NOT writing the Bible, I’m taking trips up into the 3rd heaven, shaking cobras off my arm, or bringing people back from the dead with my hanky.*” 19 Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue. 10K is the highest number in Greek; to invoke it was like saying, “infinity.” Paul is saying, “I’d rather speak 5 words you understand than a gazillion words in a tongue you can’t.” **Let me translate that for you.** Paul says, “You’re not gonna hear me speaking in tongues in church, because⁸ it doesn’t do anybody any good! Not even me, really. I’d rather speak 5 simple words you understand, “Jesus in my place, Amen,” than 10,000 you don’t understand that just make you think I’m super spiritual.

[20] Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. Stop acting like kids, thinking that spiritual gifts make you impressive. Think like mature gospel people--and mature gospel people know their gifts are for service, not show.

Vs. 21: Now, listen, this is very important. Paul is about to show you the reason God gave tongues. Understanding this one thing will show you why so many of those who claim to speak in tongues probably aren’t, in the New Testament sense: 21 In the Law (Isaiah 28, to be

⁸ D.A. Carson on the Gospel Coalition.

exact) it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” [22] Thus tongues are a sign (“sign” means they were communicating something) **not for believers but for unbelievers...** Who was the sign for? Unbelievers. Not for other believers in church, but for unbelievers.

And, more importantly: “What kind (of unbelievers) were they a sign for?” Vs. 21, “...by people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people.” Isaiah is talking about the Jews. Tongues were a sign to unbelieving Jews that the gospel was not just for them, but for the whole world.⁹ You see, the Jews had a really hard time with that, even though God had told Abraham that was the goal from the beginning. They thought God should only be worshiped in the Hebrew tongue. So, when the gospel first went out to the Gentiles, God, according to Isaiah, gave a miraculous sign TO UNBELIEVING JEWS that this work--getting the gospel to the Gentiles--was from him. That was the purpose of the sign. And technically, they are a sign of judgment on Israel. They declared: “You Jews wouldn’t receive the gospel, so God is taking the gospel to the Gentiles who will listen.”

So, when someone tells me that their private prayer time is filled with speaking in tongues, I always want to ask, “How many unbelieving Jews are present in your private prayer time?” How many are seeing that sign? That’s the purpose of the sign. It’s not for you to feel close to God, but for God to signify something to unbelieving Jews. I’d ask the same thing in worship services where speaking in tongues is common. How many unbelieving Jews are attending these services? If the sign, according to Paul, is primarily for unbelieving Jews, what’s the purpose of you doing it privately?

⁹ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology*, 228–30.

Also, I am not sure I buy the whole “I’m praying in the tongue of an angel,” thing, to be frank. Yes, Paul mentions it in 1 Cor 13:1. He says, “Even if you pray in the tongue of an angel.” I think he’s being sarcastic. I say that because Paul never identifies “angel tongue” as a spiritual gift. It seems to me hypothetical, “If I were to speak in the tongues of ANGELS...” There is no case anywhere in the Bible where someone actually speaks “angel.” In fact, in every instance where angels *do* show up in the Bible, they speak our language. They don’t show up going “hooga beluga.” Remember Mary, the mother of Jesus? ***Poof*** an angel shows up and says, “Mary, you’re going to have a baby!” Mary *doesn’t* pull out Google Translator and say, “Can you repeat that one more time? Speak right into the phone.” No, she says, “Have a baby? How?” She understands.

But, that said, I cannot say from Scripture definitively that God never speaks through you in a private prayer language. I just don’t see the point based on what Paul said the purpose of tongues was. **But I’ll stop where the Scriptures stop,** and I won’t clarify what God did not clarify. **The Bible tells me not to forbid to speak in tongues, vs. 39, so I won’t.** What I can say definitively, based on these verses, is that the primary purpose of tongues is as a sign to unbelieving Jews, and that you shouldn’t seek gifts for the purpose of making you feel close to God, the gospel should do that. You should seek gifts to build others up. **So, seek prophecy, not tongues.**

Furthermore: [23] If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? You go into a place and they are all speaking in tongues, people yelling out, and you get nervous. You think, “What’s wrong with you people?” ‘Oh, we’re just drunk on the Spirit.’ I don’t like to be around drunk people in any capacity. I hold my kids close and I get nervous.

[24] But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, [25] the secrets of his

heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. This is the kind of place we want to be! Where God is alive and working in the church and people cannot deny the spiritual insight we have into their lives and the power we speak with. In a skeptical place like Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, this kind of experience has a power of persuasion that our apologetic arguments won't.

[26] What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. (ready) Let all things be done for building up. [27] If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. [28] But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. If there is no interpreter present, then keep your tongue to yourself. Of course, if you have google translator on your phone, you could try typing it in to see if anything comes up: "shamma-lamma-ryah-ton."

BTW, notice that tongues are not some experience where you get taken over and can't control yourself. They are self-controlled. Don't say, "Well, I couldn't help myself, the Spirit took over" Paul says, "Yes you can." Even if you think it's from the Spirit, you're in control.¹⁰

[33] For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.
39 So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But all things should be done decently and in order.

There is a balance. You see it? **Freedom in the Spirit; and decency and in-order.** I think that we, Summit Church, have the decency-and-in-order thing down pat. We've got our orders-of-worship down to the minute and count-down-clocks. Even Paul would be impressed, I think. We could use a little more freedom in the spirit. **We don't want to lose vs 40; we want to gain vs. 39.**

¹⁰ Grudem, 421.

Now, some of you are like, "Wait A MINUTE Pastor, YOU SKIPPED SOME VERSES." Vs. 33–35. Sigh. Yes, just when you thought this chapter couldn't possibly get any harder: **As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church (14:33–35)**

Well, I think that is pretty self-explanatory, so let's pray.

Just kidding.

Oh my goodness, How do we interpret *this*? Paul is clearly not saying that women should never speak in church. How do I know that? **Well, for one thing, in chapter 11, Paul gave instructions for HOW women were to pray and prophesy in church. Remember that?** He said women were to pray or prophesy in the church with their heads covered, which in their day communicated that they were not Elders, or in authority. ***Paul is not going to give that instruction and then turn around, two chapters later, and say they shouldn't speak at all.***

The biblical rule of interpretation is that you interpret hard passages by easy ones. So, clearly this can't mean women don't speak in church because Paul has just given instructions for how they should.

So, what does it mean? Well, you can see from this chapter that there was a particular problem Paul was addressing. There were different groups in Corinth who were interrupting each other in church. Some were crying out in tongues in the middle of church; some were interrupting everybody with a word from God; others were disputing, saying, "No, that's not from God," and the whole thing seemed like a dumpster fire. So, Paul tells 3 different groups in this chapter to be quiet. Vs. 28, "don't just yell out in a tongue if there is no interpreter (vs. 28)" Vs. 30., "Don't interrupt someone else who is giving a

prophecy with a better one that you have.” And now, to the women of Corinth, he says, vs. 33, “Don’t be disputing prophecies given by others, evaluating whether they are from God, because that is something reserved for the office of Elder.”

That’s why, in vs. 35, Paul tells the women if they have questions to ask their husbands at home. The word for “ask” in vs. 35 is “interrogate.” It means more than just “asking for clarification.” It means Dispute. Critique. These women are not leaning over during the service whispering, “What chapter are we in again?”¹¹ Paul is referring here to the “weighing of prophecy,” interrogating it; to establish what’s really from God and what is not. That is the function of an Elder, and a woman should not play that role.¹²

Furthermore, in vs 34 the word he uses for “be silent” does mean primarily “stop talking.” The majority of the times it’s used in the New Testament it means “to hold one’s peace.” That is, he is urging these wisdom to have a submissive spirit and not presume the role of an Elder.

What Paul says here is remarkably consistent with what he says elsewhere.

- In 1 Cor 11, he says, “Speak, woman, but not without a head covering, i.e. a show of submission;
- in 1 Tim, he tells women to speak and teach, but not as an Elder.
- Here, he says, “Speak, woman, but not in a way that puts you in the position of interrogating or “weighing prophecy” like you are an Elder.
- That’s really consistent, if you ask me.

¹¹ ἐπερωτᾶω “to ask” does seem critical in nature the majority of times it’s used in the NT. <https://biblehub.com/greek/1905.htm>

¹² I am following the reasoning of D.A. Carson and John Mark Comer. See D.A. Carson, <https://document.desiringgod.org/recovering-biblical-manhooood-and-womanhood-en.pdf?ts=1620230082> p. 194ff

Now, some will try to say, “Well, Paul’s instruction there is only for a particularly boisterous group of women in Corinth.” But if that were true, why would Paul say, **33 As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches?”** This is not just about Corinth, it’s about all churches everywhere. No, the better interpretation is, I think, what I have given you, and it is consistent with what Paul says everywhere: **women have access to all the spiritual gifts and they should use them in the church, publicly and privately; from the stage and one-on-one--but not in the capacity of Elder; the weighing of prophecies or speaking authoritatively on behalf of the church.**

For Paul, women play a crucial part of Christ’s body--they have all the spiritual gifts; their insight is valuable, and the church needs to hear it and our body is much worse off without them. But as we set women up to use their spiritual gifts, we’re going to respect the order he established in his church, since his church is a reflection of his image.

But let’s end where we started--we want to have a church where people do more than sing along in worship and listen to teaching. We want you to experience the presence of God. I don’t know about you, but I want people coming in like 1 Cor 14:24: **“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”**

Isn’t that what you want? If so, we’ve got to change our mentality about church and small group. This kind of thing is not going to happen only through me or a worship leader or two speaking from stage. All of you have to be engaged: **“What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.”**

You don't come in merely to sit and soak, or sing along, or just take notes. Do all those things, yes. But **when we come together, for church or small group, let's EACH come in expectation that God is going to use us to speak to others and** sensitive to what the Spirit might be putting on our heart. **Is that what you want?**

Well, congratulations! You made it through another of the Bible's most difficult chapters.

Let's pray.

- **Paul tells us to desire the gift of prophecy that we might speak profitably into the lives of others. Do you desire it? Why not ask God for it right now?**
- Has he put something in your heart right now? Something to speak to someone else. A word of encouragement, warning, or direction? Or a promise or verse? Maybe go and give it to them after church or later today.
- Small group leaders: when you go into prayer times, why not start by asking, "Hey, has the Spirit of God put anything on anybody's heart to share?" Let's give God a chance to speak through his body!